

Terms of Reference

The Role of the Chair and Vice Chair

The role of the chair (and vice chair in the chair's absence) is extremely varied and includes the following:

1. To make sure the governing body's affairs are conducted in accordance with the law.
2. To report any urgent action taken on behalf of the governing body, ensuring it is fully explained and supported. Chairs (and vice chairs in the chair's absence) have no special power to take decisions on behalf of governors unless there has been a resolution of the whole governing body to delegate a specific authority. However, they do have the power to take action if the matter is urgent and if it concerns one of the functions that can be delegated. The Education (School Government)(England) Regulations 1999 Regulation 43 defines 'urgent' as a case where delay would be seriously harmful to the school or to any pupil or member of staff, and where it would not be reasonably practicable to hold a governors' meeting to resolve the issue. Any urgent action the chair or vice chair takes on behalf of the governing body should be reported at the next meeting.
3. To ensure meetings are run effectively – that they start and finish on time, that agenda items are properly introduced, that people are encouraged to contribute and that decisions are taken when necessary and minuted.
4. To help the governing body work as a team – by recognising and using people's strengths, delegating effectively, clarifying objectives and using the whole governing body by creating committees and small groups to develop new ideas, work out plans of action and to cover contentious or difficult areas of planning. Define, with the governing body, a clear understanding of the roles of the chair, vice chair, the other governors and the professionals within the school.
5. To work with the Headteacher – be available to the Headteacher, make time to listen to concerns and give constructive advice, talk through disagreements before governing body meetings, work together on effective school policies.
6. To carry out any duties delegated by the governing body, be seen in school regularly, attend school functions or make sure another governor represents them, work with the local authority, be accessible to other governors, staff and parents, meet governors from other schools.
7. To use time effectively, their own and other people's – plan the year's cycle of meetings and a timetable for action and reports, plan for effective meetings.
8. To make it clear that all governors must accept collective responsibility for decisions taken at governors' meetings.

