



School Governors Welcome Pack



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



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Dear Colleague

I write to welcome you to becoming a school governor in Lewisham. We are grateful to you for agreeing to take on this important responsibility.

Lewisham greatly values the contribution governors make to the development of our schools. Your role is critical in raising standards of achievement of Lewisham pupils and improving their well-being and life chances. Our Governors' Services Unit provides information, training and support, which I hope you will find useful. Please call on them as they can also steer you towards other local authority services which can assist your work.

We enclose some information which I hope you will find useful. Do let us know if you have ideas or suggestions as to how we can improve our approach.

I hope you find being a school governor both worthwhile and enjoyable. Thank you again for volunteering.

Yours sincerely

Sara Williams
Executive Director for Children & Young People

What is the purpose of governing bodies?

- To ensure the best possible education for pupils
- To represent the public interest in the school

How are governing bodies made up?



Most school governing bodies are a combination of appointed or elected governors. Voluntary aided schools differ slightly - the majority of governors are known as foundation governors and are appointed by the church or voluntary organisation. The way a governing body is made up (its composition) is set out in the school's Instrument of Government (which will usually accompany this booklet).

Parent governors	elected from among parents of children and young people at the school
Staff governors	elected from among teaching and non-teaching staff at the school
Co-opted governors	appointed by the governing body. In local authority maintained schools this is on the basis of the skills they can bring to support the effective governance and success of the school
Foundation governors	(Voluntary Aided Schools) appointed by the church or other organisations as specified in the Instrument of Government
Local authority governors	nominated by the London Borough of Lewisham and appointed by the governing body
Associate members	appointed by the governing body to add expertise to committees of the governing body. They can be given the right to vote at committee meetings

Getting to know your school

Visiting the school

Governors need to get to know their schools if they are to do their job effectively. As a new governor, you will want to make an introductory visit as soon as possible to help you get to know the school. Visits should be arranged through the Headteacher who will welcome your visit.

Many schools have an established visits policy and a planned system for visits. All governors are encouraged to visit the school on a regular basis to see it in operation and to meet the staff and pupils. Visits should be planned and purposeful and should contribute to the work of the governing body. You can ask about your governing body's arrangements when you make your first visit or at the first meeting you attend.

Governors need to be clear about their role when carrying out a school visit. The visit should not be undertaken in the role of a school inspector, but rather to gain information about certain aspects of the school to help the governing body to support the school and to make informed decisions.

Most visits will take governors into classrooms. Governors will want to introduce themselves to staff and pupils and to find the opportunity to have a few words with the member of staff before leaving. It is worth remembering that the presence of a visitor does change things and governors should bear this in mind.

Governors should report back to the Headteacher preferably before leaving the school. This gives them a chance to report on their impressions and to ask any questions arising from the visit.

A governor's visit should ultimately enrich the whole governing body's understanding of the school as well as the visiting governor's. The governing body should receive a report of the visit at the next meeting.

Information

Many governing bodies have induction packs for new governors. The contents vary from school to school but most will contain information on the school including the school improvement plan and a copy of the school's last Ofsted report. If your governing body does not have an induction pack you can ask for a copy of these documents from the school.

What being a school governor involves

1. **Formal meetings** of the governing body – the law requires governing bodies to meet at least three times a year but many governing bodies meet at least twice a term.
2. **Reading** – between meetings, governors need to read minutes of the last meeting, agenda of the next meeting, supporting papers and documents.
3. **Committee meetings or working parties** – most governing bodies have established committees to undertake various aspects of their work.
4. **School visits** – governors need to visit their schools regularly – say once a term – to see the school in action. Most schools have a policy on visits.
5. **Training courses** – governors should aim to keep themselves well informed and up to date by attending relevant courses arranged by the Lewisham Governors' Services Team. You will receive an invitation to attend induction training which is held each term.
6. **Staff appointments** – governors may serve on staff appointment panels.
7. **Pupil exclusions** – governors may sit on panels to consider pupil exclusions.
8. **Staff grievance and disciplinary panels** – on rare occasions governors may serve on panels to hear staff grievance and disciplinary issues.
9. **General support to your school** – attending concerts, prize giving, plays, fund-raising and other events.
10. **Your contributions** – the most important quality that you bring is an interest in the school and in the education of young people, together with the skills and knowledge that you have acquired through your life or some expertise in a particular area.

Most governing bodies have established committees and appointed link governors to carry out the detail of their work. The areas generally covered by committees are curriculum and standards, staffing and finance, health and safety and premises. They offer an ideal way to put any particular skills that you have to good use.

For example, when appointing governors to the Finance Committee, the governing body must have particular regard to the suitability and experience of the members so if you have experience such as budgeting or scrutinising value for money decisions you would be a most useful addition.

Link governors are appointed by the governing body to take an interest in a particular area of the school such as special needs, pupil premium funding, health and safety or looked after children and to keep governors up to date on the issues.

Even if you feel you do not have any particular expertise do not worry as we offer a wide range of training to help you develop the skills, knowledge and confidence to carry out your duties.

Governing body meetings

The regular full governing body meetings are important for:

- determining strategy;
- fulfilling statutory obligations;
- making decisions;
- reviewing performance;
- considering school problems;
- encouraging the governing body to work as a team.



Meetings are effective when:

- they start on time;
- items on the agenda are properly introduced and explained;
- the governors have all read the reports to be considered and prepared their comments on the reports;
- everyone is encouraged to participate and is listened to;
- it is clear what actions are taken, by whom and when.

You can play your part by:

- preparing well for the meeting – read the agenda and other papers;
- taking papers with you to the meeting;
- making relevant contributions to the discussions;
- listening to the contributions of others;
- accepting that decisions made by the governing body are a collective responsibility;
- noting any tasks you have agreed to carry out and then fulfilling them.
- joining a committee and /or becoming a link governor and taking a special interest in a particular area of school life. You might be asked, on rare occasions, to sit on a pupil or staff discipline committee.

Please remember that if you are unable to attend a meeting you should always give your apologies to the clerk

Governors' responsibilities

The three core functions of a governing body are:

- setting vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- holding headteachers to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils; and
- overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

The governing body fulfils a largely strategic role in the running of the school by:

- setting aims and objectives;
- agreeing policies and targets for achieving those aims;
- monitoring and reviewing whether policies, targets and priorities are being achieved.

The governing body holds the headteacher to account by:

- supporting the headteacher;
- providing appropriate challenge;
- offering different opinions on proposals;
- asking questions;
- seeking information.

Budget accountability

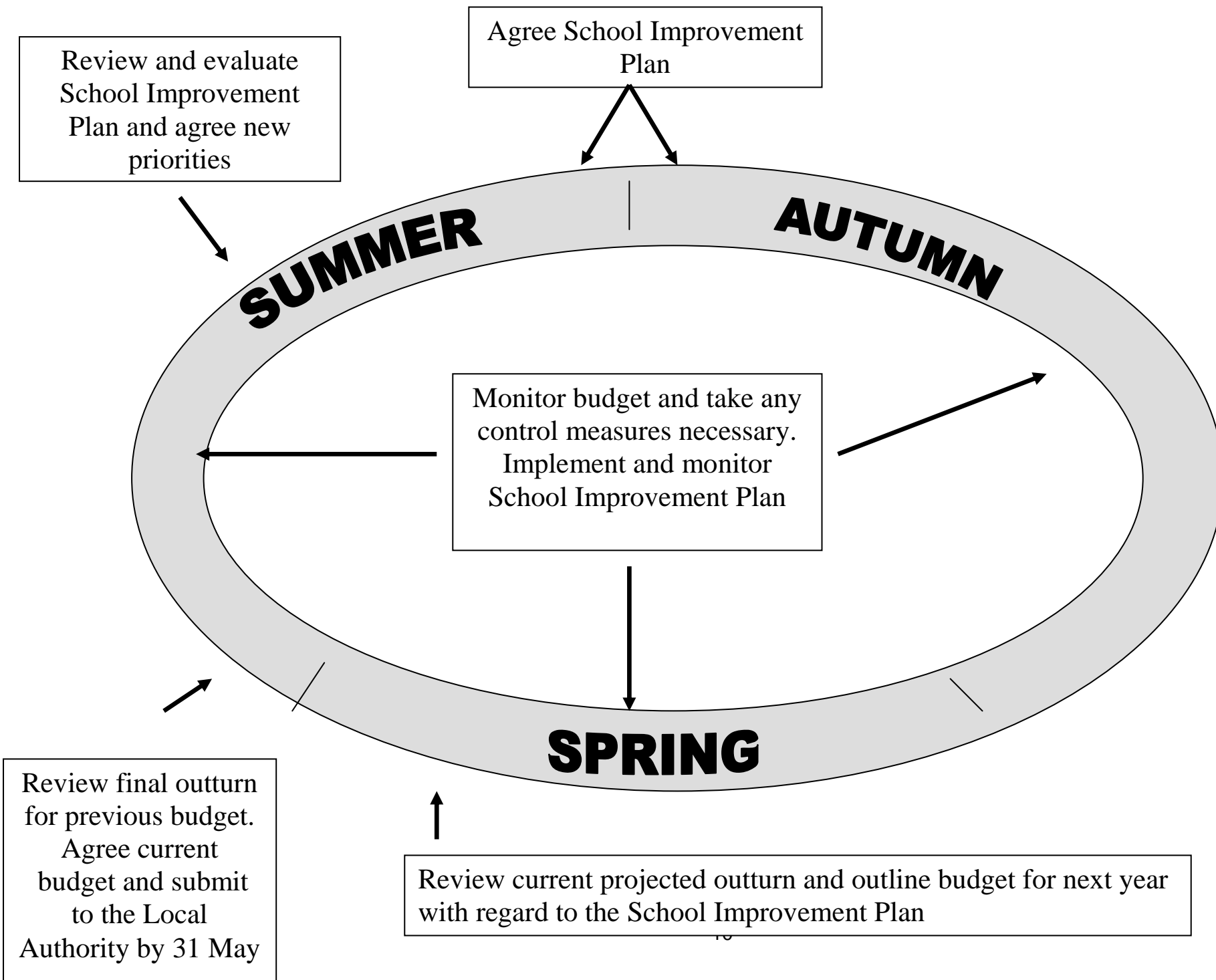
- All schools have budgets delegated to them under a formula by the local authority. Some school budgets can run into millions of pounds. It is the responsibility of the governing body to decide how to spend the budget to get the best outcomes for the pupils.
- Schools must now meet national standards known as the Financial Management Standard in Schools (FMSIS) and the financial role and responsibilities of the governing body is a key element to achieving the standard.
- Governing bodies have a duty to set a balanced budget and to monitor and keep spending under review. Schools usually agree a cycle of budget management linked into the school improvement planning (see the diagram explaining this on page 10).

- Governing bodies should also ensure financial probity and that the school achieves value for money
- Lewisham provides training for all governors covering their financial responsibilities.

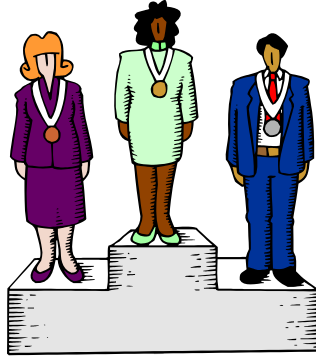
The governing body, together with the headteacher, must also comply with a range of legislation, including:

- Establishing the aims and policies of the school and how the standards of education can be improved;
- Deciding the conduct of the school – that is, how in general terms, it should be run;
- Working with the headteacher and staff to draw up the school improvement plan;
- Setting and monitoring the school’s budget in line with the priorities in the school improvement plan;
- Participating in self-evaluation with the headteacher;
- Making sure that the national curriculum and religious education are taught;
- Appointing the headteacher;
- Appointing the leadership group and supporting school staff;
- Hearing staff grievance and discipline; implementing the governors’ staff grievance and disciplinary codes;
- Ensuring that responsibilities for equality and diversity are met;
- Acting as a link between the local community and the school;
- Overseeing extended school activities.

Remember – individual governors have no power – the governing body exercises authority as a group



What are the rewards of being a governor?



Schools are fascinating places and being a governor can be very enjoyable because:

- You are helping raise standards of educational achievement for children and young people;
- You get an opportunity to use your experience and expertise to help improve the quality of children and young peoples' education;
- You feel a sense of purpose and achievement in the community;
- You develop new skills which will be useful in other areas of life;
- You make new acquaintances; and
- Partnership and involvement in the community

Governors are people who care about children and young people and the educational standards that they receive and achieve

Governor helplines

Lewisham Governors' Services Team

Tel: 020 8314 8313

Email: governors.services@lewisham.gov.uk

Governorline

Offers free and confidential advice, support and information to governors and individuals directly involved in the governance of maintained schools, academies and free schools in England.

Tel: 08000 722 181 - Monday to Friday from 9 am to 8 pm . Closed on bank holidays.

Useful information and advice

Governors' handbook: for governors in maintained schools, academies and free schools. The most recent revised version is available at the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governors-handbook>

Department for education

You can access information on the government's current policies:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>

Ofsted (Office for standards in education, children's services and skills)

It inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people, and services providing education and skills for learners of all ages.

Tel: 0300 123 1231 - General enquiries Monday to Friday, 8 am to 6 pm

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>

Ofsted data dashboard

This provides a snapshot of school performance and skills providers. It complements the Ofsted inspection report by providing a summary of results data over a three year period and comparisons to other schools or providers.

<http://dashboard.ofsted.gov.uk/>

National governors' association (NGA)

A national membership organisation representing governors and trustees in local authority maintained schools and academies in England. It is an independent charity that aims to support and promote good school governance. It publishes the bi-monthly magazine *Governing matters*, a *Guide for newly appointed governors of state schools* and *The chair's handbook*.

<http://www.nga.org.uk/Home.aspx>

For governors of Church of England schools

Southwark Diocesan Board of Education, 48 Union Street, London SE1 1TD

Tel. 020 7234 9200

<http://www.education.southwark.anglican.org/education/governance/>

For governors of Catholic schools

Southwark Schools' Commission, St Edward's House, St Paul's Wood Hill, Orpington BR5 2S

Tel. 01689 883 344

<http://www.educationcommission.org.uk>

Useful information for new members of governing bodies



- The school's instrument of government as required by law;
- Lists of members of the governing body;
- A list of the committees and working parties of the governing body with memberships and terms of reference;
- A calendar of governing body and committee meetings; school terms and holidays and major school events for the current school year;
- A copy of the staffing structure of the school, including names of staff, subjects taught and other responsibilities as appropriate;
- The school's current school improvement plan or summary.
- The most recent Ofsted inspection summary report on the school;
- The minutes of recent meetings of the governing body;
- Many governing bodies have agreed induction procedures / arrangements.

Directorate for Children and Young People can help you

Lewisham Directorate for Children and Young People's Governors' Services is a specialist unit that supports and advises the borough's 1300 school governors serving on nearly 80 governing bodies.

Staff in the unit are always on hand during working hours and are happy to answer any questions you may have or to advise on any problems that you are experiencing.

At the beginning of each term you will receive the Lewisham Governors Information Pack which contains the newsletter, briefings and training programme. Please bring the information pack with you to governors' meetings.

In addition, the Lewisham Governors' Association hosts events to which all governors are invited. These offer a good opportunity to meet and network with other governors and find out what is going on in Lewisham. Details of these events are usually in the *Governors' Information Pack*.

Support and development

Governing bodies have a lot of responsibilities but Lewisham runs a termly training programme which, over the year, will cover most areas of governors' responsibility. You will need to check with your school whether it subscribes to the training programme. Details of the training available are sent to you at the beginning of every term in the *Governors' Information Pack*

All governors are encouraged to attend relevant training sessions – see the training programme in the *Governors' Information Pack*.

Lewisham provides a range of training sessions held centrally and school based governing body training specially designed to suit the needs of individual governing bodies.

**Governors' Services
Lewisham Directorate for Children and Young People
3rd Floor, Laurence House,
1 Catford Road, London, SE6 4RU
Telephone: 020 8314 8313
Fax: 020 8314 3050**

Email: governorsservices@lewisham.gov.uk

Governors can telephone for advice on issues concerning them