

Information for prospective governors

What do governors do?

Hope Learning Trust York (HLTY) local governors are volunteers who are responsible for strategic leadership and accountability within a school. Their key functions are to:

- ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- hold the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils
- oversee the financial performance of the school and make sure its money is well spent

In practise, this means that the Local Governing Committee (LGC) is responsible for such things as:

- monitoring the progress that the academy is making
- setting targets for school improvement
- setting and monitoring the budget
- setting local policies and ensuring they are adhered to

and other decisions regarding the strategic direction of the school. All decisions are made as a group, with all LGC members having equal rights and status.

Governors are not involved in the operational running of the school. The daily management is the responsibility of the headteacher / principal. LGCs are accountable to the Board of the Multi-Academy Trust and several “stakeholders” for the way in which the school is managed, including parents, pupils, the local community and OFSTED.

What happens at Local Governing Committee meetings?

Everything a Local Governing Committee (LGC) does is decided at a meeting. These meetings vary in formality and frequency depending on the nature of the LGC. LGC meetings and MAT Board of Trustees’ meetings are held at least three times a year.

Some LGCs also have working groups for further discussion if they feel they are needed. Usually these fall into categories such as curriculum and standards; staffing; finance; and premises. Sometimes one working group will cover more than one area to suit the needs of the school.

Who can become a HLTY local governor?

There is a formal list of people who are disqualified from becoming a governor included within the HLTY governor application form. Apart from these disqualifications, however, almost anyone over the age of 18 can apply to become a governor if they have the skills and experience to offer the LGC.

Categories of governor and how they are elected/appointed

Local Governing Committees vary in size and composition, depending on the setting. It should be remembered that all governors, including the headteacher/principal, are equal in status and have equal voting rights.

What time commitment is expected?

LGC meetings are held at least three times a year and dates are usually set a year in advance. Meetings usually last up to two hours and governors will be sent papers in advance for prior

reading. This ensures that meetings can focus on discussion and decisions, rather than governors reading papers in the limited meeting time available.

Governors must also be committed to getting to know their school. This will involve visiting the setting so that they can observe what goes on, and also attendance at events where they can meet staff and parents.

All governors are volunteers and the time commitment expected is quite significant. Some employers may give 'reasonable time off' to employees so that they can undertake their duties. Individual governors would need to discuss this with their employer and establish whether or not the time off is with pay.

Most governors serve for a four-year term of office. Governors can resign at any point during their term and can request re-appointment, or can be re-elected at the end of the period.

What support do governors receive?

HLTY contracts in support from the Governance Support and Development Service within City of York Council. This support includes access to a helpline during office hours, run by an experienced team who can provide advice and support on any governance matters; access to a website containing information and guidance on key issues; and a regular electronic newsletter providing up to the minute governance information. New governors will receive an induction pack and be invited to attend a 'Welcome to Governance' training session. This session introduces the three core responsibilities of LGCs, explores the types of challenges governors may face during their time in post and provides the opportunity for governors to produce a personalised action plan for the year ahead.

A comprehensive programme of face-to-face and online governor training is also available and governors will receive a copy of the training programme at the beginning of each academic year – or on appointment. Fellow governors are also an obvious source of support to new LGC members.

How to become a local governor at a HLTY school

* If you are interested in becoming a governor at a particular school, please contact the headteacher/principal for an application form.

* For more general enquiries, please contact the HLTY Governance Advisor for more information or to request an application form (jess.swarbrick@york.gov.uk)