

Gwynedd Governors' Handbook

2025 - 2026

Foreword

Dear Governor,

A warm welcome to the Gwynedd Governors' Handbook. This document has been created to provide a detailed, clear and practical guide to support you in your role as a school governor. Its purpose is to ensure that you understand your statutory responsibilities and strategic role in supporting and leading schools across Gwynedd.

As governor, you play a critical role in the success of our schools and the future of our pupils. You volunteer your time and skills and commit to making a real difference to young people's lives, and we are extremely grateful to you for this valuable public service.

This handbook will offer:

- an explanation of your role and responsibilities as individual governors and as part of the governing body;
- information on legal and procedural requirements;
- practical advice on how to be an effective governor;
- resources and attachments to assist you in your day-to-day work.

Thank you for your dedication to education in Gwynedd, and for being part of the team working to ensure the best possible standards for our pupils. Without you, our schools would not be able to thrive in the same way.

With thanks and best wishes,

Education Department

Cyngor Gwynedd

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1. What is a School Governor?

1.1 Introduction

School governors are volunteers who play a vital role in ensuring that schools are effectively led, rigorously managed, and provide the highest quality education to all pupils. The role is not about the day-to-day running of the school; rather, it is a strategic role that sets direction, monitors progress and ensures accountability.

1.2 The Strategic Role of a Governor

- **Setting the school's vision and values:** Defining what the core goals and expected standards are.
- **Setting the strategic direction:** Short-term and long-term planning for the benefit of the pupils.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Reviewing data and evidence to ensure real progress.
- **Ensuring accountability:** Holding the headteacher and senior leadership team to account for performance and use of resources.

1.3 Who can be a Governor?

There are several categories:

- **Parent governors** – parents or legal guardians of pupils.
- **Teacher/staff-governors** – representatives from the workforce.
- **Community or partnership** – individuals representing the local community or external partners.
- **Foundation** – in church schools, representatives appointed by the church authority.
- **Pupils (secondary schools)** – pupils' voice representatives (with specific restrictions on voting rights).

1.4 Competence and Constraints

Not everyone can serve as governor. Constraints apply to individuals who have certain criminal convictions, conflicts of interest or those who have previously been dismissed from the role.

1.5 Why are Governors Important?

- Represent the voice of parents and the community.
- Ensure that decisions are made in the best interests of the pupils.
- Contribute diverse skills and experiences to strengthen the school's leadership.
- Ensure transparency and accountability in public finances.

1.6 Principles of the Role of a Governor

1. **Critical friend:** Support the headteacher but also challenge constructively.
2. **Accountable to:** Pupils, parents, staff and the community.
3. **Representative:** Bring diverse perspectives to the discussion.
4. **Strategic:** Focus on the bigger picture, not on day-to-day operational issues.

1.7 The Value of Volunteering as a Governor

It is a valuable role that supports a new generation of learners and gives individuals the opportunity to develop leadership skills, work in a team, and understand how public resources are managed.

2. Role of the Governing Body

2.1 Definition

The governing body is the statutory group that is responsible for overseeing the general work of the school. It works in conjunction with the headteacher but does not manage the school on a day-to-day basis. Rather, its role is to set the strategic framework, approve policies, monitor progress, and ensure that the school is accountable to parents, the local authority, the Welsh Government and the wider community.

2.2 Core Responsibilities

The governing body has three main areas of responsibility:

1. Strategic Direction

- Set the school's vision and goals.
- Approve the School Development Plan and monitoring its implementation.
- Ensure that the school remains relevant to the needs of the community.

2. Critical Friend

- Support the headteacher and staff.
- Ask constructive questions and encourage high standards.
- Challenge decisions where necessary, to ensure the best outcomes for pupils.

3. Ensure Accountability

- Hold the headteacher and leadership team accountable for the school's performance.
- Monitor academic standards, pupil welfare, and use of resources.
- Ensure transparency in decision-making and use of public funds.

2.3 Specific Statutory Duties

There is an extensive list of them, but these are the most prominent ones:

- **Policies:** Developing, approving and reviewing statutory policies (e.g. safeguarding, complaints, ALN, health and safety, equality).
- **Staffing:** Appointment of the headteacher, oversight of performance management, and decision-making regarding disciplinary and dismissal of staff.

- **Finance:** Approving the annual budget; monitor spending; ensuring value for money.
- **Education:** Ensuring that the curriculum is broad, balanced and complies with Welsh Government requirements.
- **Well-being:** Ensuring that the health, safety and safeguarding of pupils and staff is a priority.
- **Estyn Inspections:** Receiving and responding to inspection reports; drawing up an action plan and monitoring progress.

2.4 Principles

- **Corporate accountability:** Individual governors cannot act alone; all decisions are made jointly.
- **Democracy:** Decisions are made by voting, with a simple majority deciding.
- **Transparency:** Meeting minutes must be taken and made available to the public, where appropriate.
- **Equality:** Ensure that all decisions respect the rights and needs of every individual.

2.5 Limitations on the Governing Body's Powers

- The governing body has no right to interfere with the day-to-day operation of the school (e.g. timetabling, class management, management of individual staff, except in formal disciplinary matters).
- The body is not responsible for delivering lessons or making day-to-day pedagogical/teaching decisions – that is the duty of the headteacher and teachers.
- All decisions made must be within the statutory framework set by the Welsh Government and the local authority.

2.6 Importance of a United Team

The governing body works best when:

- each member understands his or her role;
- decisions are made on the basis of clear information;
- the chair facilitates fair and balanced discussions;
- respect, confidentiality and professionalism are central to the relationship between governors, the headteacher and the staff.

3. The Role of the Individual Governor

3.1 Definition

While decisions are made by the entire governing body, each governor has clear individual responsibilities. Each member contributes to the strength of the body by bringing their skills, experience and personal perspective to the discussion. However, it is important to remember that an individual governor has no formal authority unless the governing body has given them a specific delegation.

3.2 Expectations of All Governors

1. Prepare in advance

- Read the agenda and relevant papers before each meeting. You should receive these from the Clerk 5 working days before the meeting.
- Understand the issues that need to be discussed in order to contribute effectively.

2. Attend meetings regularly

- Attendance is essential for the body to function effectively.
- If a governor is frequently absent, the body may consider dismissing that member.

3. Actively contribute

- Ask clear and constructive questions.
- Give balanced perspectives and avoid dominating discussions.
- Challenge the headteacher and senior leadership team when necessary, but in a respectful and supportive way.

4. Maintain confidentiality

- Do not share sensitive or personal information outside the governing body.
- Do not discuss individual issues of staff or pupils with people who are not part of the governing body.

5. Comply with the code of conduct

- Each governing body has a code of conduct that all members must sign.
- This includes acting honestly, professionally and fairly at all times.

6. Attend training

- All new governors must attend statutory induction training.
- Training on data interpretation must also be attended.
- For a chair or clerk, additional training is mandatory.

7. Work for the benefit of pupils

- Every decision made by a governor should be guided by the principle:
what is best for the pupils?

3.3 Principles of Personal Conduct

An effective governor:

- listens to other points of view before forming an opinion;
- respects the democracy of the governing body even if he/she does not agree with a decision;
- works collaboratively with other governors, the headteacher and the clerk;
- keeps an eye on the strategic picture, not daily operational details;
- maintains focus on the vision and values that guide the school.

3.4 Representation

- **Parent governor:** brings a parent's experience and perspective, but is not the formal spokesperson of any particular parent. Personal issues from parents should be referred to the headteacher or the complaints policy.
- **Teacher/staff governor:** offers a professional opinion as a member of staff, but remembers that they do not represent the views of all teachers or other staff members.
- **Community/partnership governor:** represents the wider community, building links and ensuring that the school serves the local area.
- **Local Authority Governor:** they are not representatives of the LA – their loyalty is first to the school and to the community it serves. They can present a broader perspective on how the school fits into education provision.
- **Associate pupil governor (secondary):** contributes learners' views, but without having voting powers on some sensitive issues.

3.5 Personal Accountability

Although an individual governor does not have executive powers, there is an expectation:

- that they act ethically and in accordance with the law;
- that they adhere to high standards of honesty and public responsibility;
- that they can answer questions about their attendance, contribution and compliance with the code of conduct.

4. The Chair's role

4.1 Definition

The chair is the elected leader of the governing body. The role is key in ensuring that the body functions effectively, professionally and is united. The chair is elected by the members of the governing body for a one-year term (with the right to be re-elected). The headteacher or the members of staff who are Governors cannot be chair or vice-chair.

4.2 Main Responsibilities

1. Leading the Governing Body

- Ensure that the body works as an effective team with a clear vision.
- Ensure that the agenda and papers are prepared in time with the clerk and headteacher.
- Lead meetings in an organised and balanced way.

2. Working with the Headteacher

- Maintain a constructive relationship with the headteacher based on trust and respect.
- Supporting the headteacher but also challenging where necessary.
- Ensure that the headteacher has the necessary resources and support to lead the school.

3. Ensuring Accountability

- Ensure that the body's decisions are implemented effectively.
- Monitor progress against the School Development Plan.
- Ensure that the school responds to the findings of Estyn's inspections.

4. Representing the Governing Body

- Speak on behalf of the body at external events, meetings or discussions.
- Maintain links with the local authority and other partner organisations.

5. Managing Meetings

- Ensure meetings start and end on time.
- Facilitate fair discussions where everyone has the opportunity to contribute.
- Keep the discussion focused on the agenda.

- Summarise and confirm decisions with clarity.

6. Committees and Delegation

- Ensure that committees are established with clear terms of reference.
- Make urgent decisions between meetings when delegated by the body or in an emergency.

7. Ensuring Training and Development

- Attend statutory training at the start of the role.
- Encourage other members to attend training and develop their skills.

4.3 Characteristics of a Good Chair

- **Leadership** – able to inspire and co-ordinate the work of the governing body.
- **Communication** – clarity in presenting information and encouraging discussion.
- **Impartiality** – treat everyone fairly and ensure that every voice is heard.
- **Commitment** – give the role the necessary time and energy.
- **Constructive scrutiny** – support the school but also ensure appropriate challenge.

4.4 Relationship with the Vice-Chair

- The chair must work closely with the vice-chair to ensure continuity.
- The vice-chair takes over when the chair is unavailable.
- Both should work together to share the workload and ensure consistent leadership.

4.5 Limitations on the Chair's Powers

- The chair does not make decisions alone (unless a specific power has been delegated or in an emergency).
- The chair must always act within the decision-making framework of the governing body.

4.6 Training and Support

- Leadership training is mandatory for all new chairs in Gwynedd.
- Support is available from the Governors Support Unit.

5. The Clerk's Role

5.1 Definition

The clerk is the independent administrative and legal officer who serves the governing body. Although he/she is not a governor and therefore does not have the right to vote, their role is essential to ensure that the body operates lawfully, orderly and effectively. The clerk acts as the governing body's memory, keeping official records and leading on procedures.

5.2 Main Responsibilities

A. Organising meetings.

- Ensure that meeting dates are scheduled in a timely manner.
- Send invitations and supporting papers at least 5 working days in advance.
- Prepare and circulate agendas in collaboration with the chair and headteacher.

B. Recording and Keeping Records

- Keep official records ('minutes') of all meetings.
- Ensure that records are accurate, clear and reflect the body's decisions.
- Circulate draft minutes to governors within two weeks of the meeting.

C. Members' Register and Information

- Keep an official register of all governors, stating category and term of office.
- Ensure that declarations of business interests and conflicts of interest are collected and updated.
- Notify the local authority when there is a vacancy or change in membership.

D. Legal and Procedural Advice

- Remind the governing body of statutory requirements and time limits (e.g. annual meeting, report to parents, policy review).
- Advise on committees' voting, delegation and implementation procedures.

- Ensure that the body operates in accordance with the law and Welsh Government guidance.

E. Communication and Additional Services

- Circulate information from the local authority, the Welsh Government and Estyn.
- Inform governors of training opportunities.
- Ensure that governing body documents are stored securely and in accordance with data protection regulations.

5.3 Status of the Clerk

- The clerk is not a member of the governing body.
- They cannot vote or lead on policy decisions.
- They operate independently and professionally.
- The role is paid for through the school budget or through a service level agreement with the local authority.

5.4 Support in Gwynedd

If a school is having trouble appointing a clerk, they can use the Local Authority clerking service. This service provides a trained and independent clerk, with access to statutory information and support from the Governors Support Unit.

Contact:

Governors Support Unit, Education Office, Cyngor Gwynedd, Caernarfon.

Phone: 01286 679303 E-mail: melerimairGriffith@gwynedd.gov.wales

5.5 Characteristics of a Good Clerk

- Organised and thorough.
- Understands the law and statutory guidance.
- Confidential and independent.
- Helpful in answering governors' enquiries.
- Able to advise without unduly influencing decisions.

5.6 Limitations on the Role

- The clerk cannot vote or lead on policy decisions.
- They should not act as chair or participate in discussions as a governor.

6. Annual Responsibilities of the Governing Body

6.1 Introduction

Each governing body has a number of statutory tasks that must be carried out in each academic year. These responsibilities ensure transparency, accountability and compliance with the Welsh Government's legal requirements. It also facilitates planning and monitoring of the school's progress.

6.2 Elections and Appointments

- **Chair and Vice-Chair:** These positions must be elected at the beginning of each academic year. The headteacher cannot serve in these roles.
- **Committees:** The membership and terms of reference of each committee must be confirmed.
- **Delegations:** Any powers delegated to committees or individuals must be reviewed and agreed.

6.3 Appointment of Associate Governors

It is good practice, and a requirement in some fields, to appoint individual governors to oversee certain aspects:

- Designated Governor for Safeguarding
- Designated Governor for Additional Learning Needs (ALN)
- Designated Governor for Health and Safety
- Designated Governor for Equality and Inclusion

6.4 Review of Statutory Policies

The governing body is responsible for approving and reviewing some specific policies annually and others every 3 years. Annual ones include:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Dealing with Complaints Policy
- Equality Policy
- ALN Policy
- Performance Management Policy

6.5 Budget and Finance

- Approve the school's annual budget.
- Monitor expenditure against the budget throughout the year.
- Ensure value for money and effective use of public resources.

6.6 Monitoring Educational Progress

- Receiving regular reports on pupils' performance.
- Using school data (including national data) to evaluate progress.
- Monitoring progress against the objectives of the School Development Plan.

6.7 Reports to Parents

- **Annual Report:** The governing body must prepare and publish an annual report for parents.
- **Parent Meetings:** A meeting with parents must be arranged if the required number of parents are signatories of a statutory petition.

6.8 Responding to Estyn Inspections

- Receive and consider inspection reports.
- Prepare an action plan for any recommendations.
- Monitor progress against the action plan.

6.9 Training

- Ensure that all new governors attend statutory training.
- Ensure that chairs and clerks complete their mandatory training.
- Encourage all governors to participate in ongoing training.

6.10 The Welsh Language and Language Policy

- Ensure that the activities of the governing body reflect the official status of the Welsh language in Gwynedd.
- Monitor that the school is operating in accordance with the county's language policy.

6.11 Annual Review of the Governing Body's Work

- Conduct a self-evaluation of the governing body's own work.
- Identify areas for improvement and objectives for the coming year.

7. Committees and Terms of Reference

7.1 Introduction

In order for the governing body to function effectively, it is customary and a statutory requirement to set up committees to deal with specific issues. This ensures that work is shared, that expert decisions are made by sub-groups, and that the whole body is able to focus on strategic issues.

7.2 Principles of Committees

- **Delegation:** The governing body must decide what powers are given to committees.
- **Terms of Reference:** Each committee must operate within a written remit, approved by the body.
- **Accountability:** Committees must report back to the governing body in full on their decisions and activities.
- **Records:** Records of all committee meetings must be kept.

7.3 Statutory Committees

Some committees are required by law:

1. Staff Disciplinary and Dismissal Committee

- Deals with the disciplinary or dismissal of staff.
- At least three governors must be included.

2. Staff Disciplinary and Dismissal Appeal Committee

- Deals with appeals against decisions of the disciplinary and dismissal committee.
- It must include governors who were not on the first committee.

3. Pupil Disciplinary and Exclusion Committee

- Considers cases of short-term or permanent exclusion.
- Reviews the headteacher's decisions and hears appeals.

4. Admissions Committee (in schools that are an admissions authority)

- Decides on admission applications where places are limited.

7.4 Recommended Committees

It is good practice for the body to set up additional committees to share the work:

1. Finance Committee

- Monitor expenditure against the budget.
- Ensure value for money.
- Report to the governing body on any financial risks.

2. Personnel/Staffing Committee

- Oversee staffing, recruitment and performance management issues.
- Ensure staffing policies are fair and transparent.

3. Complaints Committee

- Dealing with formal complaints from parents or other individuals in stage C of the complaints process.
- Ensure fairness and compliance with the statutory complaints policy.

4. Health and Safety Committee

- Monitor the implementation of health and safety policies.
- Ensure that the school site is safe for pupils, staff and visitors.
- Conduct an annual inspection.

7.5 Committee Membership

- The same governor should not serve on more than one committee if it creates a conflict of interest (e.g., being on both disciplinary and appeals committees).
- A balance of experience and skills should be ensured on each committee.
- Individual governors may be appointed as a contact for a specific subject area (e.g. safeguarding, ALN, the arts), even if they are not on a formal committee.

7.6 Terms of Reference

All committees must have **written terms of reference**, noting:

- The purpose of the committee.
- The specific matters that are within its responsibility.
- Powers to make decisions or to make recommendations only.
- How many governors make up a quorum.
- Frequency of meetings.

- Requirements to report back to the governing body.

7.7 Delegated Powers

- The governing body may delegate certain powers to committees, a chair or a headteacher.
- Delegation decisions must be clearly recorded in official records.
- Not all things can be delegated – some decisions (e.g. approving an annual budget) remain with the full body.

8. Personnel Matters

8.1 Introduction

The governing body plays a key role in all aspects of school staffing. Although it does not manage staff on a day-to-day basis (that is the duty of the headteacher), governors do have important statutory and strategic responsibilities in appointments, performance management, professional development, and disciplinary and dismissal processes.

8.2 Appointment of Staff

1. Appointment of the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher

- The governing body is responsible for appointing the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- A dedicated appointments committee is usually set up which is made up of representatives from the governing body and, if necessary, representatives from the local authority.
- Transparent, fair and open recruitment procedures must be followed, in accordance with employment law and Welsh Government guidance.

2. Appointment of Other Staff

- The headteacher usually takes the lead on the appointment of teaching staff and other support staff.
- Depending on the school's policy, Governors may also be part of other staff appointment panels.
- The governing body has a role of overseeing and approving recruitment policies and ensuring that they are fair and inclusive.
- The body should ensure that verification processes (e.g. Disclosure and Barring Service – DBS checks) are followed for all new members of staff.

8.3 Performance Management

- The governing body is responsible for **evaluating the headteacher's performance** every year.
- The review is usually carried out by a small committee of formally trained governors, with the support of an adjudicator or a local authority official.
- Targets are set and progress is monitored.
- The body has a strategic oversight role in ensuring that performance management systems are in place for all school staff.

8.4 Professional Development

- The body should encourage a culture of continuous professional learning.
- It is responsible for ensuring that funding and opportunities are available for staff training.
- It should be ensured that all members of staff have equal access to development opportunities.

8.5 Disciplinary and Dismissal of Staff

1. Staff Disciplinary Committee

- Deals with formal disciplinary proceedings against staff.
- It can make decisions about disciplinary penalties, including dismissal where necessary.

2. Appeals Committee

- Listens to appeals against disciplinary or dismissal decisions.
- It must include governors who were not part of the original decision.

3. Principles of Fairness

- All processes should be fair, transparent and in accordance with employment law.
- Staff should be entitled to trade union or other representation during any disciplinary process.

8.6 Staff Health, Safety and Well-being

- The governing body has a statutory responsibility to ensure that the school operates in accordance with health and safety legislation.
- Policies and procedures should be maintained to protect the physical and mental well-being of staff.
- A culture in which the well-being of staff is prioritised alongside the well-being of pupils should be encouraged.

8.7 Equality and Inclusion

- The body is responsible for ensuring that staffing policies comply with equality legislation.

- There should not be any discrimination based on sex, age, disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or any other protected characteristic.
- Diversity and inclusion should be promoted in staff recruitment and development.

9. Dealing with Complaints

9.1 Introduction

Every school has a statutory duty to have a **formal complaints policy**. This ensures that parents, pupils, staff or members of the community are able to raise concerns in a fair, transparent and effective manner. The governing body is responsible for adopting this policy and for ensuring that it is implemented correctly.

9.2 Key Principles

- **Accessibility:** The policy must be readily available, in accessible formats and in both Welsh and English.
- **Transparency:** Every step of the process must be clearly explained to everyone making a complaint.
- **Fairness:** Everyone who makes a complaint must be treated fairly and objectively.
- **Confidentiality:** Information must be kept confidential, but it may be shared with relevant people to investigate the complaint.

9.3 Informal Action

1. Raising a Concern Early On

- Typically, attempts should be made to resolve problems informally in the first place by discussing with the class teacher or headteacher.
- Often, direct discussion resolves the issue without the need for further formal action.

9.4 Formal Action

If the matter cannot be resolved informally, the formal process begins:

1. Submission of a Written Complaint (Step B)

- The complaint must be submitted in writing, usually to the headteacher.
- If the complaint relates to the headteacher, it should be addressed directly to the chair of the governing body.

2. Written Response (Step B)

- The headteacher or chair investigates the complaint and provides a written response within a reasonable period of time (usually 10–15 working days).

3. Governors' Panel (Step C)

- If the complaint is not resolved, the complainant can ask a panel of governors to consider the matter.
- This panel must include at least three governors who were not involved in the previous steps.
- The person complaining has the right to present their case in person and have a representative to support them.

4. Final Decision

- The panel of governors must provide a clear written decision.
- This is usually the final step of the internal process.
- If the complainant does not think that the school has dealt with the complaint correctly they can refer the complaint forward to the Local Authority.

9.5 Complaints from Pupils

- Schools must ensure that pupils have a safe and accessible route to raise concerns.
- This can include a complaints box, a mentoring system, or a designated contact among staff.
- Pupils' complaints should be treated in the same way as those of parents – with respect and fairness.

9.6 Role of the Governing Body

- Adopt and update the dealing with complaints policy.
- Ensure staff and parents are aware of the procedure.
- Ensure that any complaints are dealt with fairly and in accordance with policy.
- Conduct training for governors who sit on grievance panels.

9.7 Role of the Chair

- Receive complaints relating to the headteacher.
- Ensure that the process is followed fairly and transparently.

9.8 Recording and Learning from Complaints

- Records should be kept of all stages of the complaints process.

- These records should be reviewed annually to identify trends or areas for improvement.

10. Confidentiality and Standards of Conduct

10.1 Introduction

Governors are public citizens and persons of trust. It is therefore essential that they maintain high standards of conduct, act ethically and adhere to the principles of public life. This ensures the confidence of the public and the community in the work they are doing.

10.2 Confidentiality

- **Respecting private information:** Governors must keep all personal and sensitive information shared at meetings confidential.
- **No sharing without permission:** Information relating to pupils, staff or parents should not be shared with people outside the governing body.
- **Statutory exemptions:** In safeguarding matters or when legally required, information may need to be shared with the relevant authorities.
- **Recognition of decisions:** Even if an individual governor does not agree with a decision, confidentiality must be respected and the decision must be supported externally.

10.3 Code of Conduct

Every governing body in Gwynedd adopts a formal code of conduct which all governors must sign. The code reflects the principles of public life that are central to the education sector:

1. **Selflessness:** To act in the best interests of the pupils and the school first.
2. **Integrity:** Avoid situations where conflicts of interest could arise.
3. **Objectivity:** Making decisions based on evidence and facts.
4. **Accountability:** Be prepared to explain and justify decisions.
5. **Transparency:** Be open about processes and decisions.
6. **Honesty:** Always be honest when discussing issues and representing the body.
7. **Leadership:** Be willing to act as a role model for others.

10.4 Conflicts of Interest

- Governors must declare any personal or financial interest they have in matters being discussed.

- If there is a conflict of interest, the governor must withdraw himself from the discussion and not vote.
- A **register of interests** must be kept and updated by the clerk.

10.5 Professional Standards

- **Respect:** Treat fellow governors, staff, pupils and parents with dignity and respect.
- **Suitable behaviour:** Do not use offensive language, aggressive behaviour or abuse of position.
- **Cooperate:** Work as part of a team for the benefit of the pupils.

10.6 Consequences of Breaching the Code of Conduct

- The governing body can warn a governor if his/her behaviour is undesirable.
- In severe cases, a governor may be suspended from the body, in accordance with the relevant regulations.
- Extreme cases could result in a ban from serving as governor in the future.

10.7 Guidance and Support

- The Governors Support Unit in Gwynedd is available to advise on any ethical or procedural concerns.
- The Welsh Government has published detailed guidance on codes of conduct and public standards.

11. The Welsh Language in Gwynedd Schools

11.1 Introduction

The Welsh language is central to Gwynedd's identity, culture and education. The county is committed to ensuring that all pupils develop to be fully bilingual by the time they leave school. The governing body plays a key role in ensuring that the school's policies and procedures support this vision.

11.2 Gwynedd's Language Policy

- **Vision:** Ensure that all pupils are proficient in Welsh and English to the same high standard by the end of their compulsory education.
- **Teaching through the medium of Welsh:** Most primary schools teach through the medium of Welsh as a first language.
- **Maintaining and developing skills:** In secondary schools, there is an emphasis on maintaining a high standard of Welsh and English, ensuring that pupils are able to use both languages confidently in everyday life and work.

11.3 Role of the Governing Body

1. Monitoring the implementation of the school's language policy

- Review language policies annually.
- Ensure that language targets are included in the School's Development Plan.

2. Ensuring that resources are available

- Ensure that Welsh-medium educational resources are available to staff and pupils.
- Ensure that extra-curricular activities are available through the medium of Welsh.

3. Supporting staff

- Encourage and support staff to develop their Welsh language skills where necessary.
- Ensure language training opportunities for the whole workforce.

4. Links with the community

- Ensure that the school contributes to the Welsh life of the community.

- Promote events, performances and activities through the medium of Welsh.

11.4 Principles of Bilingual Education

- **Equal opportunities:** Ensuring that pupils from all backgrounds have the opportunity to learn Welsh.
- **Continuation:** Building on pupils' language skills from Foundation Phase up to A-Level.
- **Relevance:** Using Welsh as a living language in school and in the community.

11.5 Estyn Expectations

- Estyn inspects the way in which Gwynedd's schools promote the Welsh language.
- This includes the standard of teaching in Welsh, social use of the language, and the school's contribution to the sustainability of the Welsh language in the community.

11.6 Role of individual Governors

- To be ambassadors for the Welsh language in the school and the community.
- To encourage the natural use of the Welsh language in meetings and activities of the governing body.
- To ensure that school documents, where possible, are available bilingually.

12. Training for Governors

12.1 Introduction

Training is an essential element of ensuring that governors are able to carry out their functions effectively. The Welsh Government has made some training courses statutory, and the Local Authority in Gwynedd offers a full programme of additional training opportunities to strengthen the skills and knowledge of governors.

12.2 Statutory Training

Each governor must complete the following courses:

1. Induction Training for New Governors

- Basic knowledge of the role of the governor, the governing body and the legal framework.
- Must be completed within the first year of service.

2. Interpreting School Data

- Training on the use of pupil performance data and school information for effective scrutiny.
- All governors must complete it at least once during their term of office.

3. Training for Chairs

- Effective leadership and governance courses.
- Mandatory for any governor who is elected chair.

4. Training for Clerks

- Mandatory for all new clerks.
- Includes meeting procedures, recording of minutes, and understanding of the law.

12.3 Additional Training in Gwynedd

Cyngor Gwynedd offers a range of additional training for governors, including:

- **Safeguarding** – understand roles and responsibilities in relation to child protection.
- **Excess and Finance** – how to monitor the school's budget and ensure value for money.
- **The Critical Friend**

12.4 How Training is delivered

- **Online courses:** live on Teams – there is an annual programme of the statutory training + additional sessions
- **Online courses:** recorded or on other learning platforms.
- **Face-to-face events:** conducted locally by the LA.

12.5 Recording and Monitoring Training Attendance

- It is the duty of every governor to record training attended.
- The clerk keeps an official record of training.
- Failure to complete statutory training can result in losing the right to serve as governor.

12.6 Training Benefits

- Improves governors' confidence to ask insightful questions and make decisions.
- Ensures a better understanding of the law, school policies and data.
- Supports the school by bringing additional skills and knowledge to the governing body.

13. School Handbook and Annual Report for Parents

13.1 Introduction

Parents have a statutory right to clear, accessible and up-to-date information about school life and performance. The governing body is responsible for ensuring that this information is presented through two main documents: **The School Handbook** and the **Annual Report for Parents**.

13.2 School Handbook

- **Purpose:** to provide current and prospective parents with practical and comprehensive information about the school.
- **Typical content:**
 - the school's core vision, values and policies;
 - information about the schedule of the school day and the terms;
 - information about the curriculum and courses offered;
 - discipline and behaviour management policies;
 - health and safety arrangements, including emergency arrangements;
 - admission arrangements and information about payments or additional costs;
 - information about extracurricular activities and school events;
 - contact details for the school and governing body.
- **Update:** the handbook should be updated annually and made available to parents in accessible formats.

13.3 Annual Report for Parents

- **Purpose:** to provide formal information to parents on the school's work and performance during the previous academic year.
- **Statutory content of the full Annual Report:**
 - Information about any formal meeting held with parents in accordance with section 14.2;
 - Details of the governing body members (including the name and contact details of the chair and clerk – may be c/o the school), governor category, and terms of office;

- Information about arrangements for the next parent governor election, if that information is available;
 - Full financial statement outlining the school's income and expenditure;
 - Information about attendance;
 - Secondary: Years 10 and 11 – Latest summary of the Secondary School's performance;
 - Secondary: Information about school leavers – such as their employment or training after leaving school;
 - Steps taken by the governing body to develop or strengthen the school's links with the community (including the police);
 - Provision made for pupils to participate in sports at school;
 - Policies or strategies adopted or reviewed by the Governing Body;
 - Term dates (including half-term holidays) for the next academic year;
 - Summary of changes to the school handbook since the last annual report;
 - Statement on the curriculum and the organisation of teaching and learning at the school, including details of any special arrangements in the curriculum for Additional Learning Needs;
 - The language category that best describes the school and the use of Welsh in the school by pupils of all age groups;
 - Statement on the toilet facilities provided at the school and the arrangements made for cleaning those facilities;
 - Information about actions taken to promote healthy eating and drinking among pupils;
 - For schools identified by Estyn as requiring significant improvement or special measures, a statement on the progress made in implementing the post-inspection action plan (PIAP);
 - Summary of the school development plan.
- **Content of the Summary of the Annual Report:**
 - Information about any formal meeting held with parents in accordance with section 14.2;
 - Information about arrangements for the next parent governor election, if that information is available;

- Secondary: Years 10 and 11 – Latest summary of the Secondary School’s performance;
- Information about attendance;
- Provision made for pupils to participate in sports at school;
- Summary of the school development plan.
- **Arrangements:**
 - The governing body must publish the report once a year.
 - It should be available to all parents as a hard copy or online.
 - The report must be available in both Welsh and English.
 - The summary of the Annual Report must be shared with every parent.

13.4 Responsibilities of the Governing Body

- Ensure that both documents exist, are accurate and up-to-date.
- Approve the contents of the annual report prior to publication.
- Monitor how the school ensures equal access to information for all parents.
- Ensure that documents are available to parents with specific accessibility requirements (e.g. large print, braille, digital formats).

13.5 Importance

These two documents:

- strengthen links between the school and parents;
- ensure transparency and accountability;
- build trust and collaboration between the home and school.

14. Parents' Meetings

14.1 Introduction

Parents are key partners in their children's education and have a statutory right to receive information and be heard by the governing body. In addition to the **School Handbook** and **the Annual Report for Parents**, there is a legal provision for holding formal meetings with parents when necessary.

14.2 Statutory Right to Call a Meeting

- Parents can request a meeting with the governing body by submitting a formal petition.
- The petition must be signed by at least:
 - 10% of the school's parents; **or**
 - 30 parents (whichever is least).
- The petition must clearly state the topic or issue(s) to be discussed at the meeting.

14.3 Arranging the Meeting

- Upon receipt of a valid petition, the governing body must convene a meeting within **25 school days**.
- Every parent must receive a **written notification** of the date, time and location.
- The meeting can be held face-to-face at school or virtually via a digital platform.

14.4 Involvement and Participation

- The meeting must focus on the issue(s) identified in the petition.
- Parents can ask questions and express opinions.
- The chair must ensure that the discussion is respectful and orderly.
- The meeting is not a place to discuss personal matters about staff or individual pupils.

14.5 Role of the Governing Body

- Ensure that the meeting is planned and run in accordance with the regulations.
- Consider and respond to the concerns raised by parents.

- Take minutes and circulate notes from the meeting.

14.6 Voluntary Meetings

- In addition to statutory meetings, the governing body or school may arrange regular or informal meetings with parents to strengthen partnership.
- This can include open evenings, information meetings or parent workshops.

14.7 Benefits of Parent Meetings

- Better collaboration between parents and the school.
- Ensure that parents' voices are heard in policy making.
- Build trust and transparency between the school and home.

15. Privacy Notice and Data Management

15.1 Introduction

Schools and governing bodies collect and process a wide range of personal data, particularly about pupils, parents, governors and staff. It is essential that this data is managed responsibly and in accordance with the law, including the **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** and the **Data Protection Act 2018**.

15.2 Data Management Principles

Each governing body must ensure that personal data is:

- **Collected in a fair and transparent manner** – individuals must be informed why the data is being collected.
- **Used for a specific purpose** – the data will only be processed for the reasons stated.
- **Kept securely** – must be protected against unauthorised access, loss or damage.
- **Kept only as long as necessary** – data must be deleted or destroyed when it is no longer necessary.
- **Be accurate and up-to-date** – data must be updated regularly.

15.3 Privacy Notice

All schools must publish a **Privacy Notice** that explains:

- what data is being collected;
- why it is being collected;
- how it is being used;
- with whom it may be shared (e.g. Estyn, Welsh Government, local authority);
- the individual's rights (including the right to access, rectify or erase the data).

15.4 Role of the Governing Body

- Adoption and monitoring of the school's **data protection policy**
- Ensure systems are in place to protect data.
- Appoint a **Data Protection Officer** (usually at local authority level or as part of a cluster arrangement).

- Ensure that governors are aware of their personal responsibilities when handling data (e.g. when documents or emails contain personal information).

15.5 Rights of Individuals

Under GDPR, individuals have certain rights:

- **The right to access** their data.
- **The right to rectify** it if it's wrong.
- **The right to delete it** in some circumstances.
- **The right to restrict processing.**
- **The right to object** processing in some cases.

Schools must respond to data rights requests within **a calendar month**.

15.6 Data Protection in Practice

- Paper files must be locked and secured.
- Passwords and IT systems must be protected.
- Personal information should not be shared via non-confidential email.
- Staff and governors should be regularly trained on data protection issues.

15.7 Data Breaches

- In the event of a data breach (e.g., loss of files, hacking, or sending information to the wrong person), it must be reported to the **Information Commissioner** within **72 hours**.
- The affected individuals must also be informed if there is a serious risk to their rights.

16. Safeguarding Children and Young People

16.1 Introduction

Safeguarding children and young people is one of the most important and statutory responsibilities of the governing body. It includes ensuring that all pupils are safe, protected from physical and emotional harm, and supported to develop in a healthy and inclusive environment.

16.2 Statutory Duties

Under the **Children Act 1989 and 2004**, and Welsh Government guidance, all schools must:

- adopt and implement a clear **Safeguarding Policy**;
- ensure that all staff and governors are aware of the policy and their individual responsibilities;
- appoint a **Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP)** from the staff;
- provide regular training for staff and governors on safeguarding issues;
- collaborate with social services, the police and other partners.

16.3 Role of the Governing Body

- **Adoption of Safeguarding Policy:** Ensure that the policy is up-to-date, inclusive and reviewed at least once a year.
- **Implement safe recruitment procedures** that take into account the need to safeguard children, including arrangements to ensure that all appropriate checks are carried out for new members of staff and unsupervised volunteers who will be working with children, including relevant DBS checks.
- **Monitoring Implementation:** Ensure that the school's procedures are followed correctly.
- **Appoint a Designated Governor for Safeguarding:** The Governing Body should appoint a designated governor to monitor this area and maintain regular contact with the Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP)
- **Ensure Training:** Ensure that all staff and governors complete mandatory safeguarding training.
- **Report:** Receive regular reports from the headteacher or DSP on safeguarding matters.

16.4 Role of the Safeguarding Governor

- Maintain regular contact with the Designated Safeguarding Person.
- Monitor safeguarding training across the school.
- Ensure that the governing body is aware of any changes in legislation or guidance.
- Ensure that information recording and storage systems are secure and GDPR-compliant.

16.5 Key Principles of Safeguarding

1. **The child's well-being is central:** all decisions must focus on the welfare of the child.
2. **Prevent:** act to reduce the risk of harm before it happens.
3. **Protect:** act when a child is at risk.
4. **Partnership:** work with families and other professional bodies.
5. **Inclusion:** ensure that all children, regardless of their background, are protected.

16.6 Training

- All staff and governors must attend annual safeguarding awareness training.
- Advanced training is required for the DSP and the Designated Governor for Safeguarding.
- Training should be renewed every **two years**.

16.7 Reporting and Transparency

- The governing body must receive an annual safeguarding report from the DSP and Designated Governor for Safeguarding.
- The report includes information about training, safeguarding incidents and how issues have been managed.
- The body should review the report and consider any necessary improvements.

16.8 Breach of Safeguarding Rules

- Failure to act appropriately in safeguarding matters can result in serious legal action against individuals or the governing body.
- Governors can be dismissed if they fail to fulfil their safeguarding duties.

17. Responding to Estyn Inspections

17.1 Introduction

Estyn inspections are an essential part of ensuring the quality of education in Wales. The inspection process assesses strengths and aspects for improvement in each school. The governing body plays a central role in this process by preparing for an inspection, supporting the school during the visit, and formally responding to Estyn's findings.

17.2 Preparing for an Inspection

- **Review Key Documents:** Ensure that the school's policies, meeting minutes and data are up-to-date and accessible.
- **Self-evaluation:** Undertake a school self-evaluation process to identify strengths and priorities for improvement.
- **Briefing of Governors:** Ensure that governors are aware of the role of Estyn, the nature of the inspection and the type of questions that may be asked.
- **Communication with Parents and the Community:** Inform parents and key stakeholders of the upcoming inspection.

17.3 Role of the Governing Body during an Inspection

- **Interviews with the Inspectors:** Inspectors may meet with the chair or other members to discuss the governance of the school.
- **Providing Evidence:** Provide access to minutes, reports, and policies.
- **Representing the Body:** Respond to inspectors' questions honestly, clearly and based on evidence.

17.4 After the Inspection

1. Receive the Report

- Estyn provides a detailed report highlighting strengths and areas for improvement.

2. Share with Parents and the Community

- The school must publish a copy of the report and make it available to parents and stakeholders.

3. Post Inspection Action Plan

- The governing body is responsible for approving an action plan to address any Estyn recommendations.

- The plan must include clear targets, actions, timetables and monitoring methods.

4. Monitoring Progress

- It is the duty of the governing body to monitor progress against the action plan.
- The headteacher should provide regular progress reports.

17.5 The Strategic Role of Governors

- Ensure that the school's self-evaluation is realistic and honest.
- Ensure that the School Development Plan is based on Estyn's findings.
- Challenge and encourage the school's senior leadership team to act promptly on improvement actions.

17.6 Follow-up Inspections

- If Estyn finds serious deficiencies, it may carry out follow-up inspections.
- The governing body must work closely with the school and the local authority to ensure rapid improvement.

17.7 Learning from Experience

- Inspections are an opportunity to learn and to strengthen governance.
- The governing body should review its own role and identify possible improvements as a result of the inspection.

18. The Governing Body's Annual Calendar

18.1 Introduction

School governance continues throughout the academic year, with statutory tasks and specific activities arising at different times. The **annual calendar** is a useful tool to ensure that the governing body fulfils its duties in a timely and organised way.

18.2 Key Tasks in each Term

Autumn Term

- Elect a chair and vice-chair.
- Confirmation of committee membership and terms of reference.
- Review and approve key policies (e.g. safeguarding, health and safety, complaints).
- Approve the School Development Plan (if not already done).
- Receive a mid-year finance report.
- Receive information from the headteacher about arrangements for the beginning of the year.

Winter Term

- Monitor progress against the objectives of the School Development Plan.
- Receive a report on the results of national assessments or recent performance data.
- Review ALN and inclusion arrangements.
- Review staffing policies and performance management procedures.
- Discuss financial progress and temporary funding.

Summer Term

- Approve the school's annual budget.
- Appointment of governors to associate positions (e.g. safeguarding, health and safety, ALN).
- Prepare the annual report for parents.
- Review the school's language policy and Welsh language activity.
- Conduct the governing body's own self-evaluation.

- Discuss end-of-year arrangements and prepare for potential inspections.

18.3 Ongoing Issues

In addition to the termly tasks, some activities continue throughout the year:

- Attend training and keep training records.
- Ensure the continued implementation of safeguarding policies.
- Monitor health and safety on the site.
- Conduct governors' visits to the school to monitor curriculum and well-being.
- Ensure regular communication with parents and the community.

18.4 Advantages of an Annual Calendar

- **Organisation and Planning:** ensure that no statutory duty is ignored.
- **Transparency:** give governors and staff clarity on their expectations throughout the year.
- **Accountability:** enable the body to monitor itself and to demonstrate compliance to Estyn and the local authority.

18.5 Role of the Clerk

- Prepare a draft annual calendar at the beginning of the year.
- Ensure that all tasks and time frames are included.
- Notify the body when deadlines are approaching.

19. Policies

19.1 Introduction

Schools and governing bodies have a duty to adopt, review, and implement a range of policies. Some of these are legally required (statutory), while others are recommended or considered best practice (non-statutory and additional). Understanding the difference is essential to ensure compliance and to prioritise the work of the governing body.

19.2 Statutory Policies

These are policies that schools must adopt and review regularly. A current list along with the review period is provided in section 20.6.

19.3 Non-Statutory and Additional Policies

These are policies not required by law but recommended by Estyn, the Welsh Government, or the Local Authority. They help strengthen governance and ensure high standards. A current list along with the review period is provided in section 20.6.

19.4 Reviewing and Monitoring

- The governing body must maintain a list of all policies with review dates.
- It should be noted which are statutory and which are non-statutory.
- Relevant committees should be responsible for reviewing specific policies.
- Accessible copies should be available to staff, parents, and pupils where appropriate.

19.5 Support and Guidance

The Welsh Government, Estyn, and Gwynedd's Governor Support Unit provide guidance on statutory policies. It is important for the clerk and governing body to stay up to date with legislative changes.

19.6 Current List of Statutory, Non-Statutory and Additional Policies

	Statutory	Review Period
1	Curriculum Policy – Curriculum for Wales overview document to act as current curriculum policy	Annual
2	Teachers’ Pay Policy	Annual
3	Performance Management	Annual
4	Pupil Behaviour including Anti-Bullying	Annual
5	Child Protection	Annual
5a	Preventing Extremism and Radicalisation	3 Years
5b	Safeguarding Adults in School	Annual
6	Health and Safety (Including medication and medical needs)	3 Years
6a	Educational Visits	Annual
6b	Medication	3 Years
6c	Emergency Lockdown	Annual
7	Data Protection	3 Years
7a	Photography	3 Years
8	Equality	3 Years
9	Charging	3 Years
10	Complaints Handling	3 Years
11	Relationships and Sexuality Education	3 Years
12	Additional Learning Needs	3 Years
13	Staff Discipline	3 Years
14	Capability	3 Years
15	Staff Grievance	3 Years
16	School Uniform	3 Years
	Non-Statutory	
17	Children in Care	3 Years
18	Reasonable Force/Safe Intervention	3 Years
19	E-Safety	3 Years
20	Whistleblowing	3 Years
21	Substance Misuse	3 Years
22	Whole School Food and Fitness	3 Years
23	School Toilets	3 Years
24	Sustainable Development	3 Years
25	Attendance	3 Years
26	Absences due to Illness (Pupils)	3 Years
27	Assessment	3 Years
28	Dignity in the Workplace	3 Years
29	Property Management – specific individual policies by the Property Department	3 Years
30	Medical Needs	3 Years

	Additional	
31	Social Media	3 Years
32	Alcohol and Drugs (Staff)	3 Years
33	First Aid	3 Years
34	Collective Worship	When amended
35	Use of Volunteers in School	3 Years
36	Safe Recruitment Policy	3 Years
37	Gwynedd Schools Language Policy	3 Years
38	Homework	3 Years
39	Absences (Staff)	When amended
40	Personal Care and Toileting	3 Years
41	Governors School Visits	When amended
42	Use of the Building Outside School Hours	When amended
43	Head Lice	3 Years
44	Inappropriate Behaviour Towards School Staff	3 Years
45	School Minibuses – if applicable	3 Years
46	CCTV – if applicable	3 Years
47	Workplace Menopause Policy	3 Years
48	Flexible Working in Schools Policy	3 Years
49	Messaging Apps Policy and Guidance	3 Years
50	Paternity Leave Policy	3 Years
51	Supporting Carers at Work Policy	3 Years

20. Support and Contacts in Gwynedd

20.1 Introduction

Although volunteers, governors perform an important legal and public role. To be able to do this effectively, support, advice and information is available to all governors through Local Authority services and national organisations.

20.2 Governors Support Unit – Cyngor Gwynedd

The Governors Support Unit provides a specific service to assist school governors in the county. The service includes:

- **Procedural and Legal Advice**
Guidance on statutory requirements, meeting procedures and the role of the governing body.
- **Clerking**
A central clerking service for schools that do not have an appointed clerk or who choose to use the Council service.
- **Training**
Statutory and additional training courses on topics such as data interpretation, safeguarding, performance management and finance.
- **Communication and Information**
Regular newsletters and updates on legal and policy changes.

Contact:

Governors Support Unit, Education Office, Cyngor Gwynedd, Caernarfon.
Phone: 01286 679303

E-mail: melerimairGriffith@gwynedd.llyw.cymru

Or buddugmairhuws@gwynedd.llyw.cymru

20.3 Other support from the Local Authority

In addition to the Governors Support Unit, other departments of the Council offer support:

- **Human Resources:** Advice on staffing, contracts and disciplining
- **Accounting and Finance:** Assistance in monitoring and managing budgets.
- **Health and Safety:** Guidance on school-site safety policies and procedures.

20.4 National Support

- **Welsh Government** – provides statutory guidance, policies and [legal guidance for school governors](#).
- **Estyn** – carry out inspections and publish reports on school standards.
- **Governor Networks** – opportunities to connect with other governors, share good practice and develop skills.

20.5 Communication with Parents and the Community

- It is essential for the governing body to maintain clear links with parents, through annual reports and meetings.
- A positive relationship with the local community should be fostered, ensuring that the school is an integral part of community life.

20.6 Principles of Governor Support

- **Access:** Every governor should know where to get support and resources.
- **Clarity:** Information should be simple and easy to understand.
- **Continuation:** The support should be available throughout a governor's term of office.