

# Our Governing Board Plan for Effective Governance Chew Stoke Church School



Taken from the Competency Framework for Governance  
by the Department of Education

## Effective Governance is:

Strategic leadership that sets and champions vision, ethos and strategy.

Accountability that drives up educational standards and financial performance.

People with the right skills, experience, qualities and capacity who further develop themselves to support the priorities of the board.

Structures that reinforce clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

Compliance with statutory and contractual requirements.

## Expectation for our Board:

Be ambitious for all children, infused with a passion for education and a commitment to continuous school improvement

## Governor Attributes:

**Committed** - prepared to give time, contributing using their skills and knowledge to help create effective governance

**Confident** - of independent mind, able to lead "courageous conversations"

**Curious** - analytical and enquiring, with an understanding of meaningful questioning

**Challenging** - not accepting information at face value, and willing to "challenge the status quo"

**Collaborative** – seeking opportunities to work with others, and build working relationships

**Critical** - self-reflective, and understanding of the idea of 'critical friendships'

# 1. Strategic leadership

that sets and champions vision, ethos and strategy

Area	Why is it important?	How do the Chew Stoke Governing Board do this?
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Setting Direction Culture Values and Ethos</b></p>	<p><i>The board ensures that there is clear strategic direction for the organisation, that there are plans in place, priorities set and are monitored.</i></p> <p><i>With the school and diocese, it sets out the culture, values and ethos including Church School distinctiveness. It then conducts itself in accordance with these, ensures that the culture is embedded across the organisation and monitors outcomes of the children and young people and the reputation of the organisation in the wider community</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Governor Board (“we”) has set a clear and explicit vision in collaboration with the School Leadership.</li> <li>• We currently work according to the existing 5-year Strategic plan.</li> <li>• We are also developing a new Strategy plan for the next 5 years. This was initiated and based on a session, run at the beginning of 22/23, where the Governors and school staff worked together to outline the strategy for the next 5 years time keeping the school’s vision and children at the forefront.</li> <li>• Each year, the Governors contribute to the current year’s School Development Plan – identifying the key priorities and then with the School leadership ensuring there is clear goals and action plans for each.</li> <li>• We then monitor the progress of the School Development Plan at Full Governing Board meetings to ensure progression.</li> <li>• We organise monitoring visits to quality check the information provided by the leadership, where we also verify that the school’s vision, values and ethos are alive and clearly evident in the day-to-day operation of the school. The findings are documented in a report and submitted to the Governor Board.</li> <li>• All Governors abide by the Seven principles of Public Life (also known as the Nolan Principles)</li> <li>• Church school distinctiveness is a standing item at each FGB</li> <li>• The Governors supported the SLT and the wider community in choosing its core Christian Values</li> <li>• The Governors supported the SLT and wider school community in choosing the vision statement for the school</li> </ul>

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## Decision Making

*Following input from stakeholders the board provides the foundation for creativity, innovation and improvement in the organisation. It sets the tone. It demonstrates effective decision-making is about moving from free and frank discussion to specific, measurable actions.*

- The Board has a formal process to ensure quality decision. Voting takes place within our meetings. For more complicated decisions, a comprehensive decision paper is produced and distributed to ensure all voters have consistent and comprehensive information to inform the decision.
- Fitting the ethos of the school all decisions are reflected upon to ensure they don't impact the well-being of the school community.
- Where there are any possible conflicts of interest and it is unclear how to proceed, we take advice from Bristol City Council to ensure we are operating in line with best practice.
- We role model behaviours we would like to see in the School Leadership Team, being open to suggestion; constantly looking for ways to improve; completing actions we have committed to; giving everyone their say; challenging the status quo; honest and frank discussions, and holding people to account.
- The board is constantly looking for ways to improve. The *Governor Board Development Plan* allows us to track our focus areas for improvement and put plans in place to address them.
- As Full Governing Board meetings are critical to the Governing process, we issue a survey following each meeting to request feedback, evaluate effectiveness and request ideas for improvement. We track this over time.
- At the end of Full Governor Meeting, every governor commits to an action they will complete before the next meeting. This moves from directive, instructive leadership to personal commitment by each governor. This results in higher commitment from each governor and an increased sense of responsibility. We track these commitments through our minutes.

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<p><b>Collaborative working with Stakeholder and Partners.</b></p>	<p><i>Effective boards are well-informed about, and respond to, the views and needs of key stakeholders, particularly parents and carers. They ensure productive relationships which creates a sense of trust and shared ownership of the organisation’s strategy, vision and operational performance.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each year we reach out to our key stakeholders to request feedback.</li> <li>• Parent/Carer surveys are completed yearly. We evaluate the results and ensure the school action identified areas for improvement.</li> <li>• The school recruits’ associate governors who are children in Year 6, who complete a self evaluation of the school designed around OFSTED criteria. They interview children, teachers, school leadership and governors. The Associate Governors feedback to Governors and school leadership on what working well and areas for improvement. Prioritised actions are then included in the following years School, development plan which is monitored by the Governors.</li> <li>• The Board monitors safeguarding issues and complaints (anonymously) and trends to ensure they are being effectively addressed.</li> <li>• We have a Church Link Governor who monitors links with the Church and other partners to ensure they are functioning well and are developing.</li> <li>• The Board monitors and holds leaders to account on how the school collaborates with a range of stakeholders and partners.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Risk management</b></p>	<p><i>Effective boards play a key role in setting and managing risk appetite and tolerance. They are able to ensure that risks are aligned with strategic priorities and improvement plans and intervention strategies provide a robust framework for risk management.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have a live risk register which we developed with both the governing Board and SLT. This identifies the highest risks to the organisation. We regularly review the register to ensure that we have plans to reduce, manage or mitigate risks. These are monitored by our <i>Finance and Premises Committee</i> and overseen by the Full Governing Board.</li> <li>• High risks items are reviewed regularly by the Full Governing Board to ensure that the risk level is still relevant, and the plans are still valid, relevant and appropriate.</li> </ul>

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## 2. Accountability

that drives up educational standards & financial Performance

Area	Why is it important?	How do the Chew Stoke Governing Board do this?
<p><b>Educational improvement &amp; Rigorous analysis of data</b></p>	<p><i>This reassures the board that the information that they are receiving about the educational performance of children and young people is accurate, to challenge appropriately where necessary and to hold leaders to account for improving outcomes for all young people. Holding leaders to account is about establishing clear expectations, ensuring clear lines of responsibility, putting in place systems for monitoring appropriately, ensuring evaluation and taking action in response to that evaluation. Board members are required to develop specific knowledge to allow the monitoring of school performance and improvement. It also assists us in holding leaders to account.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <i>School Leadership Team</i> provide educational data to the <i>Full Governing Board</i> a minimum 3 times a year. We challenge and interrogate this data to ensure that we are comfortable that all cohorts are progressing appropriately, and any areas of concern are being actioned.</li> <li>• Our <i>subcommittee 'Learning &amp; Achievement'</i> does a deeper dive on the data to ensure we have comprehensive evaluation of the data especially in respect of key niche groups.</li> <li>• The board ensures it monitors the impact of the ethos of the school and also the distinctiveness of us being a church school.</li> <li>• The board ensures it recruits governors that have the skills, ability and knowledge on our board in order to understand &amp; evaluate the data. A number of our governors have educational backgrounds or work in schools. For other governors, we ensure adequate training during the Full Governing Board to develop the Governors knowledge to ensure they have the confidence &amp; knowledge to rigorously challenge the data also &amp; hold leaders to account.</li> <li>• We benchmark performance against similar sized schools in the country.</li> <li>• Our monitoring visits provide quality checks on the information provided by the School Leadership Team. This allows us to initiate follow up action where necessary.</li> <li>• Objectives are set each year by the Head teacher and a yearly appraisal is completed with selected committee and an external <i>School Improvement Partner</i>. This includes the head's individual and school performance.</li> <li>• Middle Leaders provide the Governors with development objectives for the subject they lead. This allows the Governors to have a good understanding of the wider curriculum.</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Financial Frameworks &amp; Accountability Management &amp; monitoring</b></p>	<p><i>The board ensures that the organisation is in a strong and sustainable financial position to achieve its strategic goals. It ensures the sustained financial health and efficiency of the whole organisation. The board is then able to remain sufficiently informed and make effective decisions on the use of resources and allocation of funds to improve outcomes for children and young people. It ensures that public money is utilised efficiently and in the best interests of the organisation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Full Governing Board and subcommittee 'Finance and Premises' each meet 6 times/year to monitor, evaluate and propose (to FGB) in order to ensure that the organisation is in a strong and sustainable financial position to achieve its strategic goals.</li> <li>• We complete a 5-year financial projection, to ensure we retain the oversight and forward planning to enable appropriate decision-making in the present day.</li> <li>• Budgets are monitored 6 times/year by the board and monthly by the Chair of Governors, evaluating spend against planned yearly budgets. Any upcoming potential risks are also identified to enable effective planning.</li> <li>• Through our recruitment, we ensure we have the appropriate skills &amp; experience in our Governing Board and 'Finance and Premises' sub-committee to ensure that we are financially robust &amp; every penny is spent for the best benefit of the child, with a focus on value for money.</li> <li>• Our Business Manager is recruited with experience in Single Academy Trusts and other educational settings, providing the organisation with expertise and knowledge to ensure the sustained financial health and efficiency of the whole organisation. The Board ensure that the business manager is continuously updating their skills and completing CPD, which is recorded and monitored. The goal setting and appraisal process of the school monitors the performance of the Business Manager to ensure strategic financial targets are being met.</li> <li>• The Business Manager submits a comprehensive report to each Finance &amp; premises meeting to ensure Governor have all necessary &amp; adequate information to be proactive in managing finances.</li> <li>• We benchmark spending &amp; value for money against other similar trusts and schools to pinpoint any areas that may need further scrutiny.</li> <li>• We have clear and documented delegation of authority to approve and spend.</li> <li>• The Board recruit a Responsible Officer who completes an external check 3 times/year on processes and procedures to ensure compliance.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Staffing and Performance Management</b></p>	<p><i>The board oversees executive leaders in their areas of responsibility to ensure that the organisation has the right staff who are managed and incentivised to perform to the best of their abilities.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Board evaluates the overall performance of the school, giving an indicator of effectiveness, expertise and performance of staff.</li> <li>The Board also evaluates individual cohort data to monitor performance and identify any outliers.</li> <li>The <i>Pay &amp; Personnel Subcommittee</i> ensure staffing and performance management is run in line with school policies and that policies are set in an effective way. This subcommittee evaluates vacancies and strategies for recruitment.</li> <li>The <i>Teaching &amp; Learning Subcommittee</i> has specifically recruited governors with expertise in education and/or teaching and learning to allow effective deep dive into performance, the curriculum and monitor overall staff performance.</li> <li>The Board recruits an external School Improvement Partner to conduct in-depth evaluation on teaching and learning. A Governor will be nominated to join these sessions in order to provide feedback to the Board.</li> <li>The SLT reports to the board regarding Learning Walks and the CPD of staff.</li> </ul>
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### External accountability

*The Board manages the organisation's relationship with those who have a formal or informal role in holding it to account. It enables the board to use their skills and knowledge confidently and effectively to be accountable for the delivery of the organisation's strategic plan, their own decision-making and their oversight of executive leaders.*

- As a board we maintain relationships with some key partners and those who have a role in holding the school to account.
- The Chair, Head and Governors attend the Diocese training, networking and training sessions.
- We liaise with the Regional School Commissioner who completed their latest review in Sept 22 giving the school a very positive report.
- We proactively invite members of other expertise organisations to run workshops, training sessions or evaluations.
- The Board and school meet with the Trustees to update them, regarding ongoing matters and school performance.
- We maintain relationships with the school staff by attending staff meetings and selected INSET day sessions.
- We have governors representing our different stakeholders present during meetings to ensure their perspectives are represented e.g. parents, community, church and staff.
- Our student *Associate Governors* liaise with the Chair and Governors to ensure their interests are similarly represented.
- We proactively ensure that we liaise and are involved with other schools and Governing Boards for learning & best practices e.g. our Business manager is a clerk on another board, Chair attended Governor meetings of another SAT.



## 3. People

**with the right skills, experience, qualities and capacity**

Area	Why is it important?	How do the Chew Stoke Governing Board do this?
<b>Build an effective team</b>	<p><i>The board needs to ensure effective relationships and dynamics around the table. They help to foster a learning culture where constructive challenge is welcomed; thinking is diverse; a variety of experiences and perspectives are welcomed; and continuous improvement is the norm. People that govern need to form positive working relationships with their colleagues to function well as part of a team. They need to be able to relate to staff, pupils/students, parents and carers and the local community and connect to the wider education system in order to enable effective delivery of the organisations strategic priorities.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <i>Full Governing Board</i> organise face to face meetings where possible to ensure relationships can be established.</li> <li>• We host meet and greet teas/coffees before our face-to-face meetings to help build links and relationships.</li> <li>• Meetings are structured and lead by the Chair to ensure a variety of voices are heard &amp; all Governors have an opportunity to input.</li> <li>• The Governing Board monitors the well-being of the whole school community ensuring the schools ethos is being lived out.</li> <li>• A Learning culture is created by Governors modelling behaviours like requesting feedback, action and learning.</li> <li>• Governors are asked to provide feedback both direct and anonymous after each Full Governor meetings about the effectiveness of the meetings.</li> <li>• Governors attend 3 staff meetings/yr. to build effective relationships with the School Staff.</li> <li>• Inductions include 'get to know' sessions with other Governors to build effective working relationships between Governors.</li> <li>• New Governors are assigned an experienced Governor as a mentor to support them in their integration and induction.</li> <li>• The Chair organises a regular 1:1s with each Governor to check in on their Governor journey.</li> <li>• A Skills Audit is performed yearly to assess and identify Board skills gaps.</li> <li>• The Chair also performs performance reviews with each Governor to evaluate their performance and identify any areas for development.</li> <li>• Governors are also invited to attend School events outside of specific Monitoring visits to support them to feel part of the school community but also to allow them to experience the school e.g., assemblies, School plays, Church services etc</li> </ul>

## 4. Structures

that reinforce clearly defined roles & responsibilities

Area	Why is it important?	How do the Chew Stoke Governing Board do this?
<b>Roles and responsibilities</b>	<p><i>Understanding and designing the structures through which governance takes place is vital to avoid unclear and overlapping responsibilities that can lead to dysfunctional or ineffective governance arrangements.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current Roles &amp; Responsibilities within the Board are shared with new Governors during induction.</li> <li>• For key areas, critical areas or special focus areas, we assign a 'special Interest' to a Governor e.g., Safeguarding, Phonics, Pupil premium, etc This ensures that we have a Governor who has extra focus on that area, providing more specialise guidance to the board. They receive extra training (if appropriate) in that areas and perform specific monitoring visits related to that area to ensure breadth and depth of knowledge and evaluation.</li> <li>• At the beginning of each academic year, we determine a schedule of necessary Monitoring Visits schedule for the year aligning each to the school development plan, and assigning a governor to each monitoring visit. We monitor the completion in our meetings.</li> <li>• The Full Governing Board delegate certain responsibilities to subcommittees which are documented in 'Terms of Reference'. This is reviewed yearly to ensure we can deep dive or focus on certain aspects</li> <li>• We issue a Meeting Cycle plan for the academic year, that identifies what will be covered at each meeting to ensure clarity and no ineffective overlap.</li> </ul> <p><b>Subcommittee Finance &amp; Premises, incorporating Audit</b> (meet a minimum of 6 times a year) - oversee our financial prudence to ensure we get the best value for our money and the finances are spent on areas identified in the School Development Plan and focused on the best outcomes for the children.</p> <p><b>Subcommittee Learning &amp; Achievement</b> (1-3 times) - ensures that the learning is being achieved by monitoring data &amp; the Curriculum for each subject is broad, balanced, tailored to our School and consistent. Monitor the impact of teaching in the school through achievement data, and scrutinise the school's plan for intent, and implementation by speaking to senior leaders in meetings and monitoring visits.</p> <p><b>Subcommittee Pay &amp; Personnel</b> (1 -3 times) - oversee the application of our Pay &amp; Personnel policies and the appraisal of the Head Teacher</p>

## 5. Compliance

with statutory and contractual responsibilities

Area	Why is it important?	How do the Chew Stoke Governing Board do this?
<b>Statutory and Contractual Requirements</b>	<p><i>To ensure all those involved in governance understand the legal frameworks and context in which the organisation operates and all of the requirements with which it must comply.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Induction training for all new Governors including a Chew Stoke Governors handbook</li> <li>• All Governors receive external training from external providers - Diocese or Bristol City Council.</li> <li>• Our safeguarding Governor keeps up to date with all statutory and contractual requirements to provide appropriate safeguarding governance</li> <li>• We track and record of all CPD/training completed by Governors</li> <li>• We ensure that we formally approving documents in person or on Governor hub.</li> <li>• The Board ensures that we have an experienced and trained Clerk/Governance Professional.</li> <li>• The Clerk has objectives and receives yearly appraisals to ensure continuous development</li> <li>• The Head, Chair, and Clerk are part of networks who keep them up to date of any upcoming changes to statutory requirements.</li> <li>• The Chew Stoke Governing Board has membership of <i>Governor Hub</i> and <i>The Key for Governors</i> to ensure we have the most up to date information and guidance.</li> <li>• Each Governor receives safeguarding training yearly and reads <i>KCSIE – ‘Keeping Children Safe in Education’</i>. This is then verified and centrally documented on our online Governor Hub</li> <li>• The Safeguarding Governor ensures that all staff have received appropriate Safeguarding training.</li> <li>• The Safeguarding Governor verifies that the Single Central Record (recruitment and vetting checks) is being maintained a minimum of 6 times a year.</li> <li>• The Board ensures the school complies with the Academies Trust Handbook and their funding agreement.</li> <li>• All Governors are aware of the statutory guidance and government advice included in the Governance handbook.</li> <li>• The Governors ensure that there is always an appropriately qualified and experienced Chief Operating Officer and Chief Financial Officer in post.</li> </ul>

## 6. Evaluation

to monitor and improve the quality and impact of governance

Area	Why is it important?	How do the Chew Stoke Governing Board do this?
<p><b>Managing Self Review and Personal Skills</b> <b>Managing and developing Boards</b> <b>Effectiveness</b></p>	<p><i>Monitoring the boards effectiveness is a key element of good governance. The board needs to assess its effectiveness and efficiency and ensure ongoing compliance with its statutory and legal duties under review. Individuals should also reflect on their own contribution helping to create a stronger and more motivated board. Board members should also be reflecting on how they personally are demonstrating the agreed values and culture of the organisation and what impact their individual contribution to making to effective governance. It is essential for the board to reflect on its own effectiveness including the effectiveness of its processes and structures. This also assists in building relationships and improving accountability and will enable the board to ensure that there is a clear distinction between strategic and operational leadership.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We complete a Governor Board Health Check yearly.</li> <li>• The Board development plan is live and updated 6 times a year and takes into consideration any feedback or insights gained as we continuously raise the bar for our Governing board.</li> <li>• We invite external parties in to provide an independent assessment on our effectiveness as a board e.g. an independent experienced Governor consultant.</li> <li>• We evaluate effectiveness of our meetings by issuing surveys to all governors after each meeting.</li> <li>• The Chair organises regular 1:1s with each Governors to reflect on their journey and individual contribution. A development plan is created for each Governor.</li> <li>• Skills Audit are conducted yearly to assess and identify any skills gap.</li> <li>• Our Clerk also has a yearly appraisal to allow time for reflection and evaluation of performance and contribution.</li> </ul>