



Thought Piece: Welcome to the Role of Chair



Welcome to the Role of Chair

Firstly many congratulations, being elected the chair of governors or trustees is a privileged position bringing with it both challenges and opportunities. Here an experienced chair offers some quick insights to help you with your first few meetings.

- 1) Get to know the board - understand from your own perspective their strengths, weaknesses, interests, skills, capacity, commitment, and values.
- 2) Get to know the Headteacher/CEO – the importance of putting the time and effort into building and sustaining this vital relationship cannot be understated. The role of critical friend is one of balance, sometimes a delicate balance, between support and challenge. Create a safe space for thinking together, having courageous conversations and sharing.
- 3) First amongst equals does not mean that you have to do everything - work with the vice chair, build relationships with your link governors, make connections and collaborate wisely. Pace yourself and try not to make decisions by yourself outside of the formal meeting structure.
- 4) Undertake some specific chair training – this is a great way to meet other chairs and is an opportunity to learn and reflect. Lead by example when it comes to CPD and training.
- 5) Don't try to change everything at once – make a plan but be flexible and pragmatic – you are leading volunteers after all.
- 6) Work with your clerk or Governance Professional – they are there to support and guide you. Use the systems and processes to carry the workload.
- 7) Respect boundaries. Remember governors are there to steer the ship, not row the boat.
- 8) Review your structures and link roles – it is good practice to review these at least annually. What new insights can you offer?
- 9) Communicate wisely – don't overburden governors with emails or meetings; keep them informed but don't overshare
- 10) Listen well – to the other governors, the school leaders, the pupils, the parents, stakeholders. Take the time to reflect on what you hear and build your next steps as a team.
