OVERVIEW OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
OF A SCHOOL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

**ROLE OF THE GOVERNOR**
The role of the Board of Governors is to manage the school with a view to providing the best possible education and educational opportunities for all of the pupils.

This involves
- setting the strategic direction for the school; and
- taking corporate decisions in relation to the statutory functions of the Board of Governors

**ELIGIBILITY AS A PARENT GOVERNOR**
Parents of registered pupils at the school are eligible to stand for election as a parent governor at the school or to vote in that election process. They must have a child attending the school at the time of election. They can complete their term of office even if their child leaves the school in the meantime. A ‘Parent’ is defined in legislation as a guardian and every person who has the actual custody of the child or young person.

**STRATEGIC GOVERNANCE**
The Board of Governors has an important strategic role to play in the management of the school. This is to help the school principal and staff provide the best possible education for all of the pupils. Governors bring their experience, life skills and common sense to this task. In everything they do, they should aim to raise expectations of what can be achieved by all pupils and strengthen the involvement of parents and the community. This involves
- setting the school's vision and aims;
- establishing and maintaining the school's ethos;
- setting the school's plans and policies;
- monitoring and evaluating school performance; and
- promoting self evaluation to sustain school improvement.

**Setting the school's vision and aims**
The school Board of Governors and the principal should know the school and its community and have a vision of how they want the school to develop in the future. This vision should reflect the educational goals and targets set for the pupils. It should motivate pupils and staff, build on core educational values and beliefs and moral purpose, be inclusive of stakeholders’ values and beliefs and be informed by the most innovative practice on teaching and learning. The vision will be worked out through the School Development Plan.

**Establishing and maintaining the school's ethos**
The governors and the principal should maintain an ethos for the school that promotes the moral, spiritual, intellectual, social and personal development of all its pupils. The school's ethos should contribute to the wider goals of the school and be clearly defined and understood by parents, pupils, staff, governors and the local community. It should also be consistent with a commitment to promote equality, good relations and diversity within the school and its community.

**Setting the school's plans and policies**
The School Development Plan includes the school’s financial plan, education plans and assessments, where appropriate the school’s action plan to address issues identified in a school inspection report, and the school’s policies and priorities. This provides the strategic framework within which the school Board, the principal and staff can monitor, evaluate and improve the nature
of the school’s curricular and other provision and the standards achieved by pupils making efficient use of all the school’s available resources. The drafting of the school’s plans and policies are initially the responsibility of the principal. Consideration and approval of these plans rests with the school Board and is an important responsibility.

Monitoring and evaluating school performance
There are many useful ways of measuring performance which take account of the school’s circumstances and seek to measure the value added dimension. The governors, working with the principal, must decide which key indicators they wish to monitor and make arrangements for the principal to provide the appropriate data at suitable times. The findings of ETI reports also need to be taken into account.

Having measured the school’s performance, the governors should liaise with the principal and staff in drawing up appropriate action plans to move the school forward towards improvement. These should in turn feed into the School Development Plan.

Promoting self evaluation to sustain school improvement
School improvement is most likely to be sustained over time, when a school establishes a positive culture and commitment to professional growth. Self evaluation is a process through which
• an individual teacher, groups of staff, the staff as a whole and senior management reflect on their current practice;
• identify and celebrate the strengths of the school; and
• identify and address areas for improvement in their work.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE
The Board of Governors has many varied statutory functions in relation to the local management of schools. In fulfilling these functions, the Board of Governors should support the aims and objectives of the school and act in its best interests. In practical terms this will normally involve:

School performance measures
• approving the school development plan and its priorities and targets for promoting improvement in standards of performance;
• setting performance objectives for the principal under Performance Review and Staff Development (PRSD); and
• managing the school’s finances;

Curriculum planning
• agreeing a Curriculum Policy;
• facilitating the implementation of the Revised Curriculum;
• ensuring proper provision for pupils with special educational needs;

Employment issues
• determining the school’s staff complement;
• selecting and appointing staff with regard to costs and curriculum needs;
• managing employment issues including a staff salary policy and staff conduct, discipline and grievance procedures (in compliance with the laws that prohibit discrimination and harassment and promote equality of opportunity in employment);

Pupil pastoral care and protection issues
• safeguarding and promoting the welfare and protection of pupils;
• setting general principles on good behaviour and pupil conduct;
• participating in pupil disciplinary procedures;
Roles and Responsibilities of a School Board of Governors

Publication of information regarding the school and its pupils
- providing information for parents about the school and their children;
- agreeing and applying criteria for pupil admissions;

Managing the school premises and relations with the community
- controlling the use of premises, inspecting the premises and equipment annually and ensuring the school estate is properly maintained (this will involve liaison with the Project Manager when the services are provided by a contractor);
- promoting good relations between the school and the community.

To do this governors are expected to
- prepare for, attend and participate in Board and Committee meetings;
- undertake training;
- attend school functions where possible;
- support the principal to enable him/her to control the day to day internal management of the school; and
- encourage good communications within the school.

Promoting good governance
In conducting all of its business, the Board of Governors should
- give proper weight to the advice and guidance from the principal;
- support majority decisions of the Board of Governors;
- ensure that the position of governor is not used for personal gain;
- declare all potential conflicts of interest;
- protect the confidential nature of school business; and
- work within the school’s scheme of management.

The responsibility for governing the school must be shared by the whole Board of Governors. Only the Board of Governors, acting together after discussion within a strong framework of rules and good practice by consensus or majority vote, has the power to question, to challenge or to change things.

A governor will not incur personal liability in respect of any action taken in good faith in the exercise of the school Board’s delegated duties and responsibilities. Good faith, broadly speaking, may be regarded as an act which is undertaken honestly, with no ulterior motive and in the light of the information available at the time.

Every Board of Governors has a role in promoting good governance, and in supporting pupils, staff and parents and the role of the school in the community. The Board of Governors should be involved as an equal partner with the principal and the staff Senior Management Team (SMT) in making a significant difference to the life and work of the school. The governors and the principal should have a good understanding of and respect for their separate but complementary roles. Also, the governors should have as a priority both staff and governor development.

The principal and the staff should have trust and confidence in the governors’ integrity to act in the best interests of the whole school with the pupils at its heart. Trust and confidence are developed when the governors share responsibility for the work of the school both good and bad and take decisions that will lead to improvement in the quality of the school’s education provision and pupil performance.

Supporting pupils, parents and staff
School Boards of Governors who are seen to support the pupils, send out a clear message that the pupils are valued and are an encouragement to the pupils as well as to the school staff, parents and the local community.
The involvement of parents in children’s education contributes significantly to pupils’ educational achievements and in recognition of this, many schools have established effective partnerships between home and school. It is important that Boards of Governors

- engage parents in their children's education and the work of the school;
- support parents in fulfilling these responsibilities; and
- respond appropriately to parents' concerns or formal complaints relating to their children as pupils of the school.

Parents have considerable rights and responsibilities when it comes to their child’s schooling. Boards of Governors need to have a clear understanding of parental rights and responsibilities and take proper account of them in their dealings with parents.

The teaching and non-teaching staff are often required to implement decisions made by the Board of Governors or are affected by its decisions. It is important, therefore, that all governors are seen to support the staff and to offer them as much encouragement as possible.