

Purpose of role

To provide advice and guidance to the governing board on governance, constitutional and procedural matters. A professional clerk will contribute towards the efficient and effective functioning of a governing board and its committees by providing:

- administrative and organisational support
- guidance to ensure that the board works in compliance with the appropriate legal and regulatory framework and understands the potential consequences for non-compliance
- advice on procedural matters relating to the operation of the board

Advice and guidance

The clerk provides independent and expert advice to the governing board on its duties and functions, contributing to the efficient conduct of the board by:

- advising the board on its core functions and Department for Education (DfE) governance advice, including the Governance Handbook and Competency Framework for Governance
- advising the governing board on relevant legislation and procedural matters where necessary before, during and after meetings
- knowing where to access appropriate legal advice, support and guidance, and where necessary seeking advice and guidance from third parties on behalf of the governing board
- informing the governing board of any changes to its responsibilities as a result of a change in school status or changes in the relevant legislation
- advising the board on the regulatory framework for governance (relevant acts and regulations, instruments of government)
- offering advice on governance best practice, including on committee structures and self-evaluation
- ensuring that statutory policies are in place, and highlight when staff need to review them
- advising on the annual calendar of governing board meetings and tasks
- facilitating new governor induction and ensuring they have access to appropriate documents, including any agreed code of conduct
- contributing to the induction of governors taking on new roles, in particular, chair of the board or chair of a committee
- anticipating issues which may arise, and drawing these matters to the chair's attention, proposing recommendations

Organisation and administration of meetings

The clerk prepares for and administrates meetings, allowing the board to make effective use of their time and focus on strategic matters. The clerk supports the smooth and effective running of meetings by:

- working with the chair and headteacher to prepare a focused agenda for governing board meetings and committee meetings
- liaising with those preparing papers to make sure they are available on time, and distribute the agenda and papers as required by legislation
- ensuring meetings are quorate, inclusive and well structured
- recording the attendance of governors at meetings (including any apologies, minuting whether they have been accepted or not), and take appropriate action in relation to absences
- drafting minutes of meetings, indicating who is responsible for any agreed actions with timescales, and circulate as agreed with the governing board
- circulating the reviewed minutes to all governors/members of the committee, the headteacher and other relevant bodies within the timescale agreed with the governing board
- following-up on any agreed action points with those responsible and informing the chair of progress



Governing board membership

Effective boards need members with the right skills, experience, qualities and capacity. In order to support the board's proper constitution, it is the responsibility of the clerk to:

- advise governors and appointing bodies in advance of the expiry of a governor's term of office and the impact of this on the board's capacity, diversity and skills mix
- establish, in discussion with the board, open and transparent vacancy filling processes and efficient procedures for election and appointment
- give procedural advice concerning conduct of governor elections and assist with election procedures
- collate, maintain and ensure correct publication of information about governors such as any pecuniary interests
- ensure Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and other relevant checks are carried out on any members of the board where it is appropriate to do so
- maintain a record of training undertaken by members of the governing board
- maintain governor meeting attendance records and advise the chair of potential disqualification through lack of attendance
- advise the governing board on succession planning for all governing board roles

Managing information

The clerk supports the board in maintaining records of policies and procedural documents and ensures these are accessible. This requires the clerk to:

- maintain up to date records of the names, addresses and category of governing board members and their term of office, and inform the governing board and any relevant authorities of any changes to its membership
- maintain copies of current terms of reference and membership of any committees, working parties and any governors with specific oversight of an area e.g. SEND
- maintain a record of signed minutes of meetings in school, and ensure copies are sent to relevant bodies on request and are published as agreed at meetings
- maintain records of governing board correspondence
- ensure copies of statutory policies and other school documents approved by the governing board are kept in the school and published as agreed, for example, on the website

Relationships and development

Good relationships between the clerk and members of the board are essential for open communication. Clerks also have a role to play in supporting and advising the governing board on their self-review and development. The clerk should fulfil these responsibilities, whilst maintaining independence, by:

- developing and maintaining professional working relationships with the chair, the board and school leaders
- contributing to the coordination of learning and development opportunities for those involved in governance, including induction and continuing professional development

The clerking competency framework supports individuals in assessing their own practice, skills and knowledge and identifying their development needs. Continuing professional development in the role of clerk should include:

- undertaking appropriate and regular training to maintain knowledge and improve practice



- keeping up to date with current educational developments and legislation affecting school governance
- participating in regular performance management, led by the chair