Policy on Governance

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WPSD Vision: Our vision is for all students to develop at Woodlem Park School as independent learners with self-belief and respect for others with a lifelong love for learning and a strong foundation for future success.

WPSD Mission: At Woodlem Park School we value every student. We work together as a community to ensure that students develop well in all aspects of learning so that they are equipped to face the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century wherever they may be. To do this:

We provide the best possible learning opportunities in academic subjects, personal development, moral values and life skills. Staff members and students work together in a spirit of cooperation and mutual harmony.

Aim & **Scope of the policy**: The policy on governance of Woodlem Park schools provides a broad framework for the governing Board members to effectively direct, guide and support the school management in achieving its goals. It also brings clarity to the stakeholders' understanding of the need for and purpose of having good governance to realise the organisational goals of the schools. In addition, it lays down the composition of the governing body, delineates the roles and responsibilities of the Governors, and indicates the frequency of governing body meetings while also suggesting how its working may be streamlined along certain parameters and measures of assessing the effectiveness of its governance.

Core Functions of the Governing Body: Governors role is to ensure effective leadership, transparent decision-making, and accountability in the management of the school. They serve as critical friends to the school, challenging the status quo and setting expectations. A school governing board is critical to creating an environment conducive to learning, growth, and leads to success for all members of the school community. The core functions of a governing body are:

1. **Providing Vision and Direction**: Setting clear goals and objectives for the school's development and academic achievement.
2. **Policy Development and Implementation**: Creating and implementing policies that promote excellence in teaching, learning, and student welfare.

3. **Accountability**: Holding school administrators, staff, and governing body members accountable for their actions and decisions.

4. **Stakeholder Engagement**: Actively involving parents, teachers, students, and the wider community in decision-making processes to ensure their voices are heard and their needs addressed.

5. **Ethical Conduct**: Upholding high ethical standards and integrity in all activities and interactions.

6. **Continuous Improvement**: Striving for continuous improvement in all aspects of the school's operations, including academic performance, infrastructure, and student support services.

7. **Financial Stewardship**: Ensuring proper management of financial resources, budgeting, and transparency in financial transactions.

Composition of the school Governing Body

The Board of governors typically reflect the diverse stakeholders involved in the educational process. While the composition of the governing bodies may vary depending on the specific context of a school, it is desirable to include:

1. **Chairperson**: Often appointed by the school or elected from among the governing body members, the chairperson leads meetings, represents the governing body externally, and ensures the smooth functioning of the body.

2**. Parent Representatives**: Parents of students enrolled in the school who are elected or appointed to represent the interests of the parent community. They provide valuable input on matters related to student welfare, academic programs, and extracurricular activities.

3. **Teacher Representatives**: Educators employed by the school who are elected or appointed to represent the interests of the teaching staff. They offer insights into curriculum, development, teaching methodologies, and professional development needs.

4. **Principal or School Leader**: The school's principal or head teacher is often a member of the governing body ex officio. They provide updates on school operations, academic performance, and administrative matters.

5. **Community Representatives**: Individuals from the local community or business sector who are appointed to bring external perspectives and expertise to the governing body. They may contribute insights on community engagement, fundraising initiatives, or partnerships with external organisations.

7. **Advisors**: Depending on the needs of the school, the governing body may invite advisors such as legal experts, financial advisors, or educational consultants to provide specialised advice on specific issues.

It's important for the governing body to reflect the diversity of the school community and to ensure that all stakeholders have a voice in decision-making processes. Additionally, members

should possess the skills, knowledge, and commitment necessary to fulfil their roles effectively and contribute to the overall improvement of the school.

Tenure of the Governing Body:
Governors may serve on the governing body from 3-5 years, subject to 75% of the body agreeing to their continuity of service. They may volitionally disengage after a year, or step down in case of any conflict of interest or breach of conduct.

Induction of the Governing Body:
Members of the governing body are introduced to the context of the school, the parent and student community and the school leadership team. They are provided with information about the current status of the school, the school inspection reports and taken through the school development plans, targeted outcomes as well as key challenges in achieving them.
Where necessary sessions on the following may be organised for governors on:
- The UAE inspection Framework
- Good Governance Guide
- Inclusive Framework
- Wellbeing Handbook
- And the Data portal for student Attainment

Roles and Responsibilities of Governors:
Governors play a critical role in setting direction and overseeing the working of the management. Their roles and responsibilities typically include:

1. Developing and reviewing the school's mission, vision, values, and strategic goals. They ensure that these are aligned with the needs of the school community and educational standards.

2. Establishing and reviewing school policies on various matters, including curriculum, student welfare, and behaviour, admissions, and staff recruitment. They ensure that policies are effectively implemented and compliant with relevant regulations.

3. Oversee the school's budget, financial planning, and expenditure to ensure the effective and efficient use of resources. They monitor financial performance, approve budgets, and make decisions regarding major expenditures.

4. Participate in the selection, appointment, and performance evaluation of the school's senior leadership, such as the head teacher or principal. They provide support and guidance to the senior leadership team and hold them accountable for achieving the school's objectives.

5. Monitor the school's performance against its strategic goals, academic standards, and statutory requirements. They analyse data, receive reports from school leaders, and conduct regular evaluations to identify areas for improvement and ensure accountability.

6. Engage with various stakeholders, including parents, students, staff, and the wider community, to understand their needs and perspectives. They communicate school policies, decisions, and achievements to stakeholders and seek feedback to inform governance practices.

7. Ensure that the school complies with legal and regulatory requirements, safeguarding procedures, and health and safety standards. They assess risks to the school's operations and reputation and implement measures to mitigate them.

8. Represent the interests of the school within the local community, educational authorities, and other relevant organisations. They advocate for resources, support, and policies that benefit the school and its students.

In order to ensure good governance, the governing body members participate in training and development opportunities to enhance their own knowledge, skills, and effectiveness as board members. They stay informed about changes in education policy, governance practices, and best practices in school leadership. They also engage in regular self-assessment and review processes to evaluate the effectiveness of the board's governance practices. They identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement and implement strategies to enhance governance effectiveness.

This enables school governors to ensure that schools provide high-quality education, support the well-being of students, and operate effectively and ethically within their communities.

Governing Body Meet Calendar:
The frequency of governing board meetings for schools varies depending on factors such as the size of the school, the complexity of its operations, and local regulations. Most governing boards meet at least once per term, with additional meetings scheduled as needed to address specific issues or conduct strategic planning. This typically amounts to three to four meetings per academic year. Some governors may choose to meet more frequently, particularly if they are overseeing a large or complex school, facing significant challenges, or undergoing major initiatives such as a strategic planning process, budget review, or leadership transition.

The frequency of meetings is fixed based on the need of each school, and should be sufficient to ensure that the governing board can fulfil its duties of oversight, decision-making, and strategic planning while allowing for meaningful discussion, reflection, and collaboration among board members. It's also essential for governing boards to communicate effectively with stakeholders about their meeting schedules and provide opportunities for input and feedback from the school community.

A indicative frequency suitable for whole Board meeting is 3-4 times a year, while specific governors may hold small group meetings that are more suited to their area of expertise:
- 1st Meeting at the start of the academic year
- 2nd Meeting: mid-year before annual inspection

- 3rd review meeting post inspection with focus of target setting and action planning.

Governors for inclusion, teaching and learning may meet the executive leadership team in school as often as deemed necessary, depending upon the need and context of the school.

Assessing the impact of a governing body in schools involves evaluating how effectively the board fulfils its roles and responsibilities and the extent to which it contributes to the overall success and well-being of the school community.

Assessing the effectiveness of Governance:

Governors may assess their own effectiveness and the impact of good governance through the collection of data that establishes the progress towards or attainment of objectives. These serve as evidence of effectiveness and may come from one or more of the following sources:

1. Minutes of Meetings
2. Reports for school leaders
3. Stakeholder feedback on the perceptions of the governing body's effectiveness, communication, transparency, and responsiveness to the needs of the school community as well as school performance
4. Academic performance data
5. External data of students' attainment
6. Financial statements
7. Other indicators of school performance
8. Self-assessment checklists on several parameters such as adherence to governance best practices, decision-making processes, teamwork, and leadership effectiveness. Identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement.

The Governing Body uses the findings from the impact assessment to identify areas for improvement and develop action plans to enhance the effectiveness and impact of the governing body in achieving its goals and serving the school community.

The code of conduct for the board of governors of a school outlines the expected behaviour, responsibilities, and ethical standards that members should adhere to while fulfilling their duties. Here's a sample code of conduct:

1. **Commitment to the School's Mission**: Members shall demonstrate a commitment to the school's mission, vision, and values, and work towards fulfilling its educational objectives.

2. **Ethical Conduct**: Members shall uphold high standards of ethical conduct, integrity, honesty, and transparency in all interactions and decision-making processes.

3. **Conflicts of Interest**: Members shall disclose any conflicts of interest and refrain from engaging in activities that may compromise their impartiality or integrity. They shall act in the best interests of the school and its stakeholders.

4. **Confidentiality**: Members shall maintain the confidentiality of sensitive information obtained through their role on the board and shall not disclose such information without proper authorization.

5. **Respect and Collegiality**: Members shall treat fellow board members, school staff, students, parents, and other stakeholders with respect, dignity, and collegiality, fostering a positive and inclusive school culture.

6. **Responsibility for Decision Making**: Members shall actively participate in board meetings, contribute constructively to discussions, and respect the decisions made collectively by the board, even if they personally disagree.

7. **Stewardship of Resources**: Members shall exercise prudent stewardship of the school's financial, human, and physical resources, ensuring that they are used efficiently and effectively to advance the school's mission.

8. **Compliance with Laws and Policies**: Members shall comply with all relevant laws, regulations, and policies governing the operation of the school and the responsibilities of the board.

9. **Continuous Learning and Development**: Members shall engage in ongoing professional development to enhance their knowledge, skills, and effectiveness as board members, staying informed about best practices in governance and education.

10. **Accountability and Evaluation**: Members shall hold themselves accountable for their actions and decisions as board members and participate in periodic evaluations of the board's performance and effectiveness.

11. **Communication and Transparency**: Members shall maintain open communication channels with stakeholders, providing regular updates on board activities, decisions, and initiatives, and soliciting feedback and input from the school community.

12. **Compliance with Code of Conduct**: Members shall adhere to this code of conduct and hold themselves and their fellow board members accountable for upholding its principles and values. This code of conduct serves as a guiding framework for board members to fulfil their responsibilities effectively and uphold the highest standards of governance and ethical behaviour in the school community.

Professional development for school governors

It is essential for Governors to enhance their capabilities, knowledge, and effectiveness in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities. Some key components of professional development for governors may be:

1. **Orientation and Training**: New governors should receive comprehensive orientation and training sessions to familiarise themselves with their duties, legal obligations, governance structures, and relevant policies and procedures.

2. **Workshops and Seminars**: Attendance at workshops, seminars, and conferences focused on governance best practices, education policy, school leadership, financial management, safeguarding, and other relevant topics can provide valuable insights and networking opportunities.

3. **Online Resources and Webinars**: Accessible online resources, webinars, and e-learning modules offer convenient ways for governors to deepen their understanding of specific governance issues, emerging trends, and legal requirements in education.

4. **Peer Learning and Mentoring**: Establishing peer learning groups or mentoring programs allows governors to share experiences, seek advice, and learn from one another. Mentoring relationships with experienced governors or education professionals can provide invaluable guidance and support.

5. **Governance Publications and Research**: Keeping abreast of research, publications, and reports on governance in education enables governors to stay informed about effective governance practices, case studies, and analyses of governance trends and challenges.

6. **Policy Updates and Legal Training**: Regular updates on changes in education policy, legislation, and regulatory requirements are essential. Training sessions conducted by legal experts or education authorities help governors understand their legal obligations and compliance requirements.

7. **Specialized Committee Training**: Committees responsible for specific areas such as finance, personnel, or curriculum should receive specialised training to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

8. **Strategic Planning and Leadership Development**: Governors involved in strategic planning or holding leadership positions within the governing body can benefit from training in strategic planning, leadership development, team building, conflict resolution, and decision-making.

9. **Evaluation and Feedback**: Regular evaluation and feedback mechanisms assess the impact of professional development activities on governors' performance and identify areas for further growth or improvement.

10. **Cultivating a Learning Culture**: Promoting a culture of continuous learning and professional growth within the governing body encourages governors to seek out opportunities for self-improvement, remain motivated, and stay engaged in their governance roles over time.

Investing in professional development opportunities for governors, the schools ensure that their governing bodies are well-prepared to provide effective oversight, leadership, and support for the school community.

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