

Brookland Infant & Nursery and Junior Schools



Creating opportunities, supporting aspiration, striving for excellence

Information for Prospective Governors

Brookland is a three-form entry, maintained school in Barnet. It is two schools - the Infant & Nursery School (YN-Y2) and the Junior School (Y3-Y6). The Schools occupy adjoining sites, have separate head teachers but share the same federated Governing Body. They also share the same values and ethos and work closely with one another to ensure continuity of education for the children.

The Role of the Governing Body

The role of the Governing Body is to maintain and improve the standards of achievement in the Schools. Brookland already enjoys a high level of academic success but is constantly seeking to develop and improve. It is the role of the Governing Body to assist in that process, which includes:

- Helping the Schools to promote high standards of achievement.
- Setting collective pupils' targets.
- Deciding in broad strategic terms how the Schools should be run.
- Managing the budget.
- Making sure that the curriculum meets statutory requirements.
- Determining the staffing of the Schools.
- Appointing the head teachers, deputy head teachers and other staff (as appropriate).
- Input on, and monitoring of, a school improvement plan, a self-evaluation form and, following inspection, an action plan.

The Governing Body has three primary roles:

1. *The strategic role:* which involves setting and constantly reviewing the broad framework under which the head teachers and their staff run the Schools. That framework should aim to promote high expectations and to deliver excellent teaching and learning.
2. *The role of critical friend:* which involves taking an encouraging and positive approach to the Schools' operation whilst at the same time being prepared to ask challenging questions with a view to improvement.

3. *The role of ensuring accountability:* which involves holding the head teachers to account and accepting the responsibility of being answerable, regarding the direction set and decisions made, to the parents, the wider community and the local authority.

It is worth bearing in mind that in all its dealings the Governing Body acts as a group with each individual holding equal power, and no person authorised to make decisions or take action on their own. The only exception to this is in extreme circumstances or emergencies, in which the Chair of Governors may need to act alone (Chair's action).

The Role of the Brookland School Governor

The Governing Body is highly active and motivated both in celebrating the Schools' successes and in concentrating on their improvement.

All members of the Governing Body would be expected to familiarise themselves with the Schools' strengths and targets for improvement. New governors will be able to do that with the assistance of fellow Governing Body members and by reading two key documents for each of the Schools: the School Development Plan and the Self Evaluation Form. In addition, governors are encouraged to involve themselves in the Schools directly, perhaps attending a School assembly or event, accompanying children and staff on a School trip or simply talking to pupils and staff. We hope this will be enjoyable as well as informative.

The whole Governing Body meets two evenings a term, usually starting at around 6pm. Prior to the meeting each governor will receive a set of papers to read beforehand. There are also committee meetings and other areas which may involve occasional meetings. Each governor sits on at least one committee and focuses on at least one subject area, and the current committees of the Governing Body include:

- Communication and Community Engagement
- Curriculum
- Finance
- Personnel
- Premises and Health & Safety
- Safeguarding and Personal Development
- Strategy

This structure renders the tasks of the Governing Body more manageable and enables individual governors to become involved in areas which particularly interest them.

Finally, there is a programme of training specifically for governors and governors are expected to attend sessions each school year, including induction sessions for new governors. We are sure you would find them interesting and informative, and meeting governors from other schools can prove interesting and useful.

The New Brookland Governor

The Schools value their governors both for their interest and for their time, and they endeavour to assist you in your role. When you join you will receive information on your role as a governor. You will also be provided with copies of the Schools' School Improvement Plans and Self Evaluation Forms. Initially this wealth of information may seem quite daunting, but do not worry; you are not expected to become an instant expert. Rather, we would recommend that you read through the papers in your own time and accept that it will take a while for things to become clear.

You will also be invited on a tour of each School by its respective head teacher. Even if you have already attended tours of the Schools, perhaps in the role of a parent, these visits will be quite different. The head teachers will tell you about the current position of their School, including its areas of change and development, concern or success, and you will have the opportunity to ask questions. New governors have found these tours extremely useful and both head teachers are very welcoming, making it clear that your commitment to the Schools' is appreciated and valued.

All new governors are assigned a mentor from the existing Governing Body. They will support you, offer guidance and answer any questions you may have. You will be able to contact them by phone or by email or, if you prefer, they will happily meet up with you for an informal chat. The Chair, Vice Chair and head teachers are also always willing to help.

A more formal means of assisting you in these early stages is a programme of courses for school governors. All new governors should attend the course for "Newish Governors" - attendees have found it very useful in clarifying their role, meeting governors from other schools and having the opportunity to ask questions of an expert in the field.

To ensure the safety of the children, all new governors will be required to fill in a nomination form, provide two references and complete the relevant forms for a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check.

Qualities of a School Governor

A common misconception of the school governor is that they are a person already working in, or particularly familiar with, education. That is not the case; the very purpose of a school governing body is to bring together individuals offering a wide range of skills and views. You do, of course, need to have a strong interest in education but you do not have to be an expert in it. In fact, your position as a layperson is valuable. It may be that you have a particular skill to offer. For example, an accountant could be very useful on the Finance Committee. However, this is not necessary.

You may have other, broader skills, to offer. A good governor is someone who is able to participate in discussions, but able to listen and learn as well. They will have an enthusiastic approach to the Schools, be keen to praise and celebrate its achievements as well as to guide it through difficult times.

The term of office of a school governor is four years, although it is possible to stand down before that period expires or to stand for re-election at the end of that time.

Different Types of School Governors

The composition of the Brookland Schools' Governing Body, which runs to a maximum of 18 governors, is set out below:

- Parent governor from the Infant School – one
- Parent governor from the Junior School – one
- Head teachers – two
- Staff governors – one
- Local Authority (LA) governor – one
- Co-opted governors – up to 12, including three staff members

Parent Governors

Parent governors are elected by the parents of the Schools. Parents, including carers, of registered pupils at the Schools are eligible to stand for election for parent governorship at the Schools.

Parent governors are elected by other parents at the Schools in an election. If insufficient parents stand for election, the Governing Body can appoint parent governors. Only if insufficient parents stand for election can the Governing Body appoint:

- A parent of a registered pupil at the Schools; or if that is not possible
- A parent of a former pupil at the Schools; or if that is not possible
- A parent of a child of, or under, compulsory school age

A person is disqualified from election or appointment as a parent governor of a School if they are an elected member of the local community or if they work at the School for more than 500 hours (i.e. for more than one-third of the hours of a full-time equivalent) in the school year at the time of election or appointment. If an election is running and you are a parent or carer of a registered pupil, you will automatically receive an invitation to stand. If more than one candidate is standing in an election, you should be prepared to make a written statement explaining why you are interested in becoming a governor. At Brookland, one governor is elected from parents of the Infant School and one from parents of the Junior School. If a parent has children in both Schools, they can stand for election at either.

Staff Governors

Both teaching and support staff paid to work at the Schools are eligible for staff governorship. Staff governors are elected by the School staff and must be paid to work at the School; volunteers are not eligible. Any election which is contested must be held by ballot.

School staff who are eligible for election as staff governors (i.e. who are paid to work at the School) are not eligible to serve as LA governors (see below) at their School. If they are paid to work at the School for more than 500 hours in a school year, they are not eligible for election or appointment as parent governors. Staff can, however, vote in parent governor elections if they are parents and can be governors at other schools. Their employment status will not affect their qualification for governorships in these categories at another school.

If you are interested in becoming a staff governor, you should contact your head teacher.

LA Governors

LA governors are appointed by the LA. Under the Local Government Act 2000, LA governor appointments are made by the Council or the Executive. At present in Barnet it is a Council function discharged by the Council or General Functions Committee.

If you are interested in becoming an LA Governor, you should contact Barnet Governor Services who will forward your details on to Democratic Services who will then circulate your details appropriately. A person is disqualified from appointment as an LA governor if they are eligible to be a staff governor at one of the Schools.

Co-opted Governors

Co-opted governors are appointed by the Governing Body on the basis that they have the skills required to contribute to the effective governance and success of the Schools. At Brookland, we have 12 positions available to co-opt governors as required. Due to the restriction of only having one staff governor we have determined that three of the co-opted governor positions should be set aside for staff where possible so as to ideally have four staff governors on the Governing Body (one teacher and one support staff member from each School).

Any individual can put themselves forward for consideration as a co-opted governor. For more information, you may wish to contact Mrs Brenda McCafferty (Infant School head teacher) , Ms Jenny Aylen (Junior School head teacher) or Laura Pincus (Chair of Governors) for an initial chat. Once you have completed and returned a nomination form, your details will be held on file. When a co-opted governor vacancy arises on the Governing Body, details of suitable applicants will be forwarded to the Governing Body for consideration. The skills, interests and preferences of applicants will be matched to the needs of the Schools. Though there is no guarantee of appointment, do not be disheartened; the process for appointment could take a while and your patience is appreciated.

Useful Contacts

Head Teacher of Brookland Infant School: Mrs Brenda McCafferty
Email: head@brooklandinf.barnet.sch.uk
Tel: 020 8346 6824

Head Teacher of Brookland Junior School: Ms Jenny Aylen
Email: head@brooklandjnr.barnetmail.net
Tel: 020 8346 6937

Chair of Governors: Mrs Laura Pincus
Email: chair@brooklandjnr.barnetmail.net

Governing Body Clerk & Governor Training Co-ordinator at Barnet Council: George Peradigou
Email: george.peradigou@barnet.gov.uk

Further resources

London Borough of Barnet – School Governors
<https://www.barnet.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-governors>

Department for Education – Governance Handbook and Competency Framework
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook>

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