



# Clerks' Handbook

Our vision is to enable all to flourish.

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## Foreword

This handbook has been created to provide guidance for DGAT Clerks to Local Governing Boards. It is a one-stop-shop for all the information you will need to support you in your role and should be read alongside the DGAT Chairs' Handbook, Scheme of Delegation and LGB Terms of Reference which sets out the Trust's vision and values, strategic objectives and governance structure. As Clerks you should familiarise yourself with these, as they underpin the governance of the Trust and form the context in which you carry out your role.

Clerks can make a significant impact on the effectiveness of governance in our Trust. Through quality administrative support and providing sound advice, the clerk supports local governors to carry out their duties efficiently and focus on their overarching aim which is to ensure that the children, young people, leaders and staff within in our school communities flourish.

The handbook is split into the key information you will need in your role as Clerk. All templates and resources mentioned within the handbook are available on the DGAT website Governance Members' area and are identified in purple. If there is a resource you need or would find useful, but we haven't yet created, please get in touch.

I hope that you use this handbook to guide you in your role, access the resources and training available and further develop your skills and confidence in your role. Should you require further assistance or advice at any time, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Best wishes

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## I. The role of a DGAT Clerk

Clerks are responsible for providing advice and administrative support to one or more DGAT LGBs. They may also clerk committees of the LGB, which is the Trust's strong preference.

From time to time, Clerks may also be required to clerk panels of the LGB to consider pupil exclusions, parental complaints, staff disciplinary meetings or appeals. Clerks may also be asked to support the school in clerking admission appeals meetings but this will depend school to school and Clerks should ensure they are able to claim for any additional hours this work incurs.

Clerks who are part of the DGAT central clerking service will be provided with a Trust laptop, a termly line management meeting and an annual performance management meeting. For Clerks who are not employed via the DGAT central clerking service and have a contract with an individual school should speak with the Chair of Governors about the provision of equipment and line management and performance management support.

### Effective administration of meetings

Clerks are responsible for the administration of LGB meetings. This involves:

**Scheduling meetings:** Each LGB must meet a minimum of 3 times per academic year. Meeting dates should be proposed by the Clerk and set in advance at the last LGB of the summer term for the following academic year. LGBs must consider when agreeing a meeting schedule, the availability of the Clerk.

**Preparing meeting agendas:** The LGB clerk will prepare the agendas for LGB and committee meetings. A draft agenda should be sent to the Chair and Headteacher at least two weeks in advance of the meeting. When drafting agendas, you should refer to the DGAT LGB Annual Schedule of Work. This sets out key agenda items for each LGB meeting during the year and there is a version available for LGBs who have committees and those who don't. Using the planner to produce your agendas will help to ensure governance across the Trust is conducted in a timely and efficient manner.

In planning agendas, the Clerk should also refer to the minutes of the last meeting, the most recent DGAT Governance Briefing, and any items shared by the Headteacher or Chair from the DGAT weekly Herald.

Some agenda items will have supporting documents, such as the Headteacher's Report – it is a Trust requirement that all Headteachers use the DGAT Headteachers Report to Governors and provide this to the LGB at least 3 times per academic year. You will need to request these from the relevant people when producing the agenda, so they can be made available with the agenda. This will give local governors sufficient time to read the papers before the meeting to enable them to prepare effectively. It is not acceptable for papers to be presented for the first time at the meeting, and this practice should be avoided.

### Top Tip

When putting the agenda together, consider links between different items to enable a smooth flow of discussion. Are agenda items connected in any way?

You may also want to consider putting items that require decisions, or a longer discussion, at the top of the agenda to allow enough time and focus for these items.

**Convening meetings:** Clerks should convene a meeting by sending an email to all members of the LGB at least seven clear days in advance of the meeting. This can be done by emailing as normal or by using the GovernorHub noticeboard. It is the Trust's strong preference that all schools use GovernorHub and this will be a requirement for all new schools joining the Trust. On GovernorHub you can either message everyone listed on GovernorHub against that governance group (so includes some people not on the LGB but who may attend the meetings e.g. the School Business Manager) or you can message a sub-group. You may attach the agenda to the email but all other meeting papers, along with the agenda, should be uploaded to GovernorHub and a link included in the email/message. The convening email should request that individuals send you their apologies with the reason if they are unable to attend the meeting.

Some Headteachers may upload meeting papers to GovernorHub themselves instead of sending them to the clerk. It is still the clerk's responsibility to check GovernorHub to ensure all the papers have been uploaded and are titled to match the item on the agenda they refer to, for example '5. Headteacher's Report June 2023'.

**Planning for the meeting:** Prior to the meeting, you will need to ensure you have all the relevant papers. You may wish to use a laptop/tablet at the meeting to access the papers via GovernorHub. You will need to bring along a hard copy of the minutes from the previous meeting for the chair to sign (with the 'draft' watermark removed, if it was on originally). It may also be useful to have access to, for reference, the DGAT Scheme of Delegation, LGB Terms of Reference. It is recommended that you arrive at least 15 minutes before the meeting to enable you to set up and that you sit next to the LGB Chair to enable easier communication between you during the meeting. [A Clerk's Meeting Planning Checklist is available on the DGAT website to assist with your meeting preparation.](#)

**Recording attendance at meetings:** Clerks must record local governor attendance at meetings. Apologies should be noted in the minutes and whether they have been accepted or not (hence the need for local governors to provide the reason for their non-attendance). You should also record anybody who is absent without sending apologies. It is the clerk's responsibility to establish whether meetings are quorate and the quorum for each LGB can be found in the LGB Terms of Reference. You may do this by keeping an attendance table

yourself or you can record attendance on the meeting entry on the GovernorHub calendar, via the edit button. [There is also a template for recording and publishing local governor attendance available on the DGAT website.](#)

**Drafting minutes:** The clerk's main role at a meeting is to take the minutes. These are the official record of the meeting and a key source of evidence for assessing the effectiveness of governance by the Trust and Ofsted. Minutes should be a concise, accurate record of the meeting and not a verbatim account. They should include:

- Decisions made by the LGB, including major factors leading to decisions.
- Actions agreed by the LGB – what needs to be done, and by whom.
- Support and challenge provided by the LGB – acknowledgement of successes and questions/discussions that show local governors holding the Headteacher to account for the performance of the school.

Further guidance on how to write and present minutes can be found later in this handbook. It is up to the individual clerk whether they take handwritten notes or write them on a computer at the meeting. Minutes should be typed up as soon as possible after the meeting and a draft sent to the Chair and Headteacher no later than seven days after the meeting. The purpose of this is to fact check the minutes, not to add in any additional information or remove information that was discussed or shared during the meeting.

### Top tip

Consider setting a deadline for the Headteacher and Chair to make any amendments (no more than 1 week unless it includes school holidays) after which you can assume they are acceptable for circulation.

Once fact checked by the Headteacher and Chair, the minutes should then be uploaded to GovernorHub noticeboard or circulated by email to all members of the LGB no later than 14 days after the meeting to let them know they are available. Minutes remain draft until they are approved and signed off at the next meeting.

**Agreeing and signing minutes:** At the next meeting, local governors who were at the previous meeting should agree the minutes are an accurate record of what was discussed and decided. If the minutes are not agreed, only factual points can be changed - this is not the time to re-open discussion. Any corrections can be made by hand on the hard copy of the minutes you have taken along. Amendments should also be noted in the minutes of the present meeting. When the minutes have been agreed, the chair of the meeting initials them on each page and signs at the end, whether the chair was present at the previous meeting or not. The Chair is signing them on behalf of the members who were there and have agreed to them as an accurate record of the meeting.

**Storage of minutes:** The signed minutes and associated papers of any LGB meeting or committee meeting must be available for public scrutiny, excluding confidential items. Clerks should leave the signed hard copy minutes with the school (most likely, the Headteacher) for filing securely. The Clerk should agree with the school who has responsibility for scanning and uploading to GovernorHub or the LGB minutes filing platform to ensure this is done. The Trust Head of Governance and People (HoGP) will undertake regular checks to ensure signed minutes are uploaded to GovernorHub and contact the Clerk/school if any are missing.

**Confidential items:** These should be used sparingly because LGB business is intended to be open. Confidential minutes should be recorded as a separate document and held in a secure location. The main minutes should reference that the details are recorded in separate confidential minutes. If minutes are printed, it is good practice to use different coloured paper for confidential minutes so that they clearly stand out from the main minutes.

### Top tip

You may find it beneficial to have a section which towards the end of each agenda where the board determines which items from the meeting should be recorded as confidential minutes.

**Providing advice and guidance:** Clerks also provide advice and guidance to the LGB to support local governors. This will mainly be in relation to procedural matters for the operation of the LGB in line with its delegated responsibilities as set out in the Trust Scheme of Delegation and Trust policies. You should ensure the LGB is properly constituted and conducts its business in line with the Scheme of Delegation and LGB Terms of Reference. You can seek guidance from the Trust HoGP.

**Managing information:** Clerks are responsible for managing certain records and information relating to the LGB. These include LGB membership records. The Trust's preference is that each LGB maintains a list of all the current LGB members on GovernorHub, where GovernorHub is not used, the Clerk must ensure that an up-to-date record is provided to the Trust HoGP. Clerks will need to make sure the roles of LGB and committee Chairs and Vice-chairs, Safeguarding Link Governor and SEND and Pupil Premium Link Governor are up-to-date. Please keep the HoGP informed of new and departing local governors either via GovernorHub or email. Some LGB are appointed by the Trust. The Trust will send you details of these appointments. The HoGP will also update the Clerk when the LGB Chair has been appointed by the Trust Board each academic year.

**Attendance records:** You must maintain meeting attendance records for all the LGB meetings you clerk (including any committee meetings). An up-to-date record of attendance must be published on the school website. [A template for publishing this information is available on the DGAT website.](#)



**Register of Business Interests:** The register of business interests for every person involved in governance needs to be checked and confirmed at the first meeting of the LGB in each new academic year. This information must be published on the school's website. [A template for publishing this information is available on the DGAT website.](#)

**Terms of Reference:** Most LGBs operate with committees. Unless agreed with the HoGP, every LGB must have a Finance and Resources Committee and adopt the DGAT terms of reference for this committee. The Trust strongly recommends that each LGB also has a Standards and Ethos committee and adopts the Trust terms of reference – [both are available on the DGAT website.](#) If you clerk a committee, you will need to maintain a record of the committee's membership and ensure the terms of reference are reviewed by the LGB annually. Committee meeting papers and terms of reference should be uploaded to GovernorHub or the LGB's secure document platform.

**Remote meetings:** It is permissible for local governing board meetings to be held remotely, though this should be an exception and not the norm. Please refer to the [DGAT LGB and Trust Board Remote Meetings Protocol](#) for further guidance.

**Minutes:** The signed minutes of all LGB and committee meetings should be scanned and uploaded to GovernorHub or the LGB's secure document platform. This is the responsibility of the clerk. Original hard copies should be filed in the school. Clerks, must comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Trust Data Protection Policy. Most information presented to local governors is at a summary level and so will not include personal data. However, there may be times when confidential and personal information comes up, for example a discussion about a staffing issue. In particular, local governors will receive personal information when they join a panel to review an exclusion, complaint, staff disciplinary matter or appeal. Clerks are advised to follow these data protection guidelines in accessing, handling, storing and communicating information as a matter of course:

- Do use GovernorHub or the LGBs secure documents platform to save and access documents.
- Do password protect any confidential email attachments.
- Do check you are emailing the right person.
- Do use blind copy for group email unless you have permission to share as a group.
- Do ensure any hard copies of any confidential or sensitive information are kept secure if you have them at home and elsewhere (e.g. do not leave them in your car overnight) and are correctly disposed of after use (either by handing back to school/Trust staff or by shredding them yourself).
- Do collect confidential documents at the end of the meeting and ensure they are correctly disposed of.
- Don't download confidential information onto devices unless they are correctly encrypted (e.g. computer, tablet, mobile phone, USB stick).
- Never discuss confidential matters outside of the meeting or group associated with a confidential issue.

- Consider regularly reviewing your minute-taking practice using the [Clerk to Governors SelfAudit Checklist](#).

**GovernorHub:** GovernorHub is a central online resource for clerks and local governors to access and store DGAT governance documents. All trustees and local governors as well as the Trust Executive Leadership Team, have access to areas of the site relevant to them. Each LGB has its own area on GovernorHub which clerks can use to:

- Store minutes and meeting papers
- Maintain a list of local governors and their roles
- Create a calendar of meetings
- Send messages

Clerks are given 'admin' rights to GovernorHub, the Trust HoGP and the Governance and People Administrator also has admin rights to all LGB areas. The expectation is that clerks will upload agendas, minutes and meeting documents to the site. When joining the LGB any user should receive an email inviting them to register with GovernorHub. If you require any assistance with GovernorHub, contact the HoGP or the [Governance and People Administrator](#).

**Clerking panels:** From time to time, an issue may have to be dealt with by a panel, usually at school level. All such panels must be clerked. DGAT clerks may be asked to clerk the following:

- Pupil Exclusions Panel
- Complaints Panel
- Staff Disciplinary Panel
- Staff Disciplinary Appeal Panel
- Pay Panels

**The duties of the panel clerk:** These include:

- Arranging the date, time and venue of the panel meeting
- Recruiting members for the panel\*
- Collating the papers and circulating to the panel members/attendees in advance of the meeting\*\*
- Greeting panel members/attendees and explaining the procedure for the meeting
- Taking minutes of the meeting and producing a clear, accurate record of the proceedings
- Notifying the relevant person(s) in writing of the panel's decision in the days following the meeting as per the timelines in the relevant policy.

\*A complaints panel for a school part of an academy trust must include a member who is independent of that school, so cannot be a member of the LGB. We aim to find an independent member from outside the Trust altogether. Please contact the HoGP who can recruit such a

member and can also help where you cannot find enough people from your LGB to form a panel.

**\*\***It is the clerk's responsibility to ensure this happens, but it may be more appropriate for the school to do this, especially where the clerk does not work in the school.

The Clerk should also ensure whenever there is a new governor, or a governors information changes, that they update the person in school responsible for updating the school website and Get information about schools (GIAS).

**Support and training:** DGAT clerks are encouraged to undertake training to keep their practice and knowledge up to date.

Clerks' Forums are held in person three times a year and are a chance to share ideas and practice with other DGAT clerks and to receive updates from the Trust. It is expected that all DGAT clerks will attend the Clerks forum meetings.

The [DGAT CPDL Brochure](#) includes a suite of training for local governors, and clerks are welcome to attend any of the governance training offered – there is no additional charge for this training. The DGAT central team have access to TheSchoolBus which offers a vast amount of resources. If you need access to TheSchoolBus, please contact the Governance and People Administrator.

**The role of the DGAT Central Team:** Governance at DGAT is coordinated by the Trust's HoGP and the Governance and People Administrator. We support clerks by providing a suite of resources and guidance documents to assist you in your role. We also provide bespoke support and guidance when needed – you just need to get in touch. We offer induction training for new local governors and monitor the effectiveness of local governance. We ensure that statutory and Trust-wide policies are in place, revised when necessary, and changes are communicated to the LGB.

## 2. Features of good minutes

Every LGB meeting, including meetings of committees with delegated powers, must be minuted. The minutes are the official record of those meetings. The headteacher or staff governor are not permitted to take the minutes of a meeting where the clerk is not present.

### What are minutes for?

**Legal record:** if there are any disputes about what was decided at the meeting, the minutes are regarded as the true and authoritative record of the business undertaken and the decisions made. **Practical record:** the LGB/committee needs to remember what it decided from one meeting to the next, as a record of progress and as a way of not going over the same issues and decisions. **Accountability:** parents, staff and others can read the minutes (except confidential minutes) to find out what the LGB/committee is doing.

**Communication:** the minutes inform members of the LGB/committee not present about decisions made, monitoring undertaken and how the LGB/committee is carrying out its tasks. Minutes should be in a font and type size that make it easy for everyone to read.

**Evidence:** the minutes provide evidence that local governors are fulfilling their delegated responsibilities.

Minutes are used to find out:

- what was decided and why?
- what else was reported and discussed
- what action the reader and others are to take, and when
- who should be accountable for what

### **Essential minute taking skills**

- The ability to listen carefully and understand what is being said.
- The skill of noting and recording a professional, brief, coherent and accurate summary of what has been said and agreed, even when discussions jump around.
- Knowledge of the procedure of the meeting enabling the record to be set out in the appropriate way (including confidential items).
- Clear understanding of the purpose of each agenda item and ability to ensure members achieve that, e.g. decision, approval, agreed action.
- As well as taking the minutes of the meeting, the minute taker should be aware of:
  - the purpose of the meeting
  - who the members are
  - who should receive copies of the minutes - how the minutes will be used.

### **What should go into the minutes?**

- The name of the LGB and title of the meeting.
- Date, time and venue of the meeting.
- Record of those present) and those in attendance (non LGB members) and in what capacity  
(Clerk, Deputy Headteacher, Head of English, School Business Manager etc.)
- Apologies accepted/not accepted (every member of the Board/academy council should be accounted for as present, apologies accepted, apologies not accepted or no apologies/absent)
- Record of who chaired and who clerked the meeting.
- Late arrivals/early leavers by agenda item (not just time).
- A true and accurate record of all items discussed.
- A record of decision and formal resolutions.
- Clear action points – who is doing what and by when.
- Each item numbered for ease of reference.
- No names except for actions, thanks, to record who is present and for proposers and seconders of formal resolutions.
- Each minute should be tied to an agenda item • have a separate minute for each item of topic covered at the meeting.

- Note amendments, if any, to the minutes of the previous meeting and the fact that the (amended if necessary) minutes were accepted as an accurate record • include matters arising from the previous minutes if not covered elsewhere.
- should be written in such a way that everyone easily understands them, even if they did not attend the meeting.
- Note the date, time and place of the next meeting (and who will chair and take minutes if this changes) have a place to sign and date on each page number each page in the format 1 of 4, 2 of 4, etc.

### **Style and presentation of minutes**

- Minutes should be a concise, accurate record of the meeting and not a verbatim account.
- Minutes should be written in the third person, business-like language and past tense.
- Minutes should be impartial and factual. They should not include judgmental words or remarks on people's emotions.
- Minutes should be typed using a formal layout.
- There should be headings for each item, following the agenda.
- Each minute should be self-contained. It should explicitly record each decision i.e. 'It was agreed....' or 'It was decided....' and any action agreed to implement the decision.
- Actions should stand out, e.g. in an action column with the initials of the person responsible for the action put in bold
- If an abbreviation is used, explain what it means the first time it is used, e.g. the SEF (Self Evaluation Form) or include in a table of acronyms at the start of the minutes.
- Even if the situation has changed since the meeting the minutes should reflect what happened at the meeting.
- A 'post-meeting' note in square brackets can be added to the item to indicate what has happened since.
- Try not to repeat the same phrases too many times and begin paragraphs differently to prevent minutes from becoming repetitive and boring.

There are [template minutes and agenda templates available on the DGAT website for you to use and as an example of good practice.](#)

### **Example of colloquial speech turned into a professional account of the discussion:**

**What was said:** *“A parent wasn't happy with the stupid rule of not letting kids eat snacks in the huts at playtime. He had been to see the head but could get no joy and thought the governors should sort it out.”* **What was minuted:** *“A parent was concerned that pupils were not allowed to eat snacks in the school during breaks. He had approached the Headteacher to raise his concerns without success and requested that governors discuss the issue.”*

**How much detail should be included in the minutes?** There are no rules about how much or how little detail to include. The decision depends on:

- Who will use the minutes
- What they need to know
- What they already know

The rules/format may differ for different types of meeting – the important thing is that each time the same meeting occurs, the format for the minutes should be consistent.

### Top tip

A useful way to decide how much to include is to ask yourself “If I was not at this meeting – what would I need to know?”

It is usually not necessary to record every piece of information reported to the meeting, or every point made in discussion. The minute taker should decide or seek clarification from the Chair. For long and complicated discussions, a good approach is to write something like ‘Among the points raised in the discussion were’ and then summarise the points.

### Top tip

If a verbal update contains a lot of data, it is worth finding out if it is available as an electronic document that can go out with the minutes to ensure it is accurately recorded.

Relevant questions need to be captured e.g. ‘The Headteacher was asked to explain what impact the booster classes had had on the performance of under achieving year 6 pupils?’ or ‘Governors asked questions regarding the Headteacher’s report on the following areas....’ These can then be followed by a summary of the Headteacher’s reply.

If items are on the agenda for consultation, the minutes should include a summary of ideas and clearly indicate any proposals which the meeting has agreed, should be put forward. If a report has been circulated with the agenda, or will be attached to the minutes, it can simply be referred to, and briefly summarised in the minutes i.e. ‘The training report (attached) was noted’ or ‘the Administration Officer’s report (circulated with the agenda) was accepted.’

**Writing up minutes:** If the notes are not clear, the Clerk should record what they think happened, then ask the Chair’s opinion. If they agree, it is probably accurate. If they disagree, the Chair’s version should be accepted. The LGB still retains the right to have the minutes amended again if they do not agree with the Chair’s recollection of the proceedings of the meeting. Minutes are easier to use if they highlight who is supposed to take action and by when, using a separate column with the person’s name or initials with the relevant deadline. Alternatively, the minutes can record this information as an ‘action’ line or paragraph (set

off in some way - indented or in bold italic) or as a separate action table at the end of the minutes (the advantage of this is that all actions are clearly identified and easy to access). It is up to the individual clerk to decide whether to maintain an action log which enables them to collate actions from across the meetings during the year, removing actions once complete. Minutes should include a list of all papers and reports circulated before the meeting and note in the minutes any that were tabled at the meeting.

### 3. Useful phrases and words for minutes

#### Capturing questioning and holding to account

A local governor asked...	The Headteacher was asked to explain...	Local governors questioned the principal on....
Local governors asked for clarification on...	Local governors asked for clarification on a number of issues, including...	Local governors asked for reassurance on...
Local governors explored the reasons for...	Further discussion explored...	Local governors agreed/concurred/approved
The LGB discussed...	The LGB debated...	The LGB were concerned about...
A local governor expressed/raised a concern about...	A local governor raised the issue of...	After a (full) discussion...
The LGB discussed this in detail, in particular the question of...	Among the points raised in the discussion were...	Local governors were of the opinion that...
Local governors expressed satisfaction with...	Local governors recognised that....	
In response to a question from a local governor the Headteacher informed the meeting/confirmed/explained that...		
The report had been previously circulated, and the following points were noted/highlighted...		

#### Useful phrases

A local governor asked...	The Headteacher was asked to explain...	Local governors questioned the principal on....
The Headteacher advised the LGB that...	The Headteacher confirmed that...	Local governors were referred to...
The Headteacher highlighted/explained...	The report was noted/accepted...	In conclusion...

## Decisions and actions

The LGB nominated...	Following a discussion, local governors agreed it would do X/ make plans for X/ go ahead with X	Following an evaluation, local governors decided to...
The LGB agreed.....subject to the following amendments...		
The LGB agreed/confirmed/decided/approved/ratified...		
<p><b>Could, would, should</b></p> <p><b>Could</b> – to indicate a possibility, e.g. <i>‘the Headteacher explained that the school could be inspected in the next academic year’</i></p> <p><b>Would</b> – to indicate that it will happen, e.g. <i>‘local governors agreed they would meet again after half term’</i>.</p> <p><b>Should</b> – to indicate that it ought to happen, e.g. <i>‘local governors should arrange a visit to the academy with their link member of staff’</i>.</p>		
<p><b>Nomination of Chair and election of Vice Chair:</b> In the absence of any other nominations, it was resolved by the Local Governing Board that XXX be re-elected/elected as Chair of the Local Governing Board and XXXX be nominated/re-elected/elected as Vice-Chair for the academic year.</p>		

## Useful words for your minute-writing toolkit

Decided/resolved/approved/concluded/determined	Discussed/debated/deliberated/considered/examined/analysed
Said/stated/reported/established/confirmed/verified/declared	Agreed/approved/concurred
Disagreed/disputed/not the case	Planned/intended/meant/hoped/proposed
Benefits of/merits of/advantages of/worth/value of	Problems/drawbacks/dangers/uncertainty/disadvantages
Chose/opted/selected/picked/named/preferred	Potential/possibility/likelihood/prospect/chance/probability
Options/alternatives/choice/preference/opportunity	Worried/concerned/troubled/uneasy/anxious/apprehensive
Pointed out/explained/suggested/drew attention to/raised/informed /understood	
Were reminded that/recalled/clarified/illustrated/defined/demonstrated /emphasised	
Existence of/issue of/reality of/topic of/problem of/question of	



## 4. Confidential minutes

### Minutes are confidential if:

- Names of staff, parents or children are included
- Staff pay or conditions were discussed
- A person could be easily identified from the minutes
- The subject is deemed confidential by the LGB due to its sensitivity or nature

It is good practice to refer to confidential items in the main minutes so that people are aware that there is further information on this discussion point. Confidential minutes should still include the details of who was present at the meeting and any declarations of interest made by the Local Governors in respect of the agenda. The agenda item for the confidential items recorded should match the meeting agenda e.g. if the confidential item is discussed as agenda item 4, then the agenda meeting minutes should indicate that a confidential item was discussed, and the confidential minutes marked as 'agenda item 4'.

Confidential minutes will be deemed confidential indefinitely unless there is a timescale agreed by the LGB whereby the information will no longer be considered confidential.

For electronic copies of minutes, it is important to make it obvious which minutes are confidential – you can use a watermark, state “confidential” in the file name, or colour the header. If you are storing confidential minutes on GovernorHub you should restrict the viewing of the folder containing each set of confidential minutes to those who are entitled to access the minutes. Confidential minutes must only be shared with those present for the confidential discussion or decision.

Paper copies of confidential minutes must be approved and signed by the Chair, but these must be stored securely in a separate folder to the non-confidential minutes, to avoid them being shared or accessed inappropriately.

### Top tip

Consider printing confidential minutes for storage on coloured paper.

## 5. Policies

The DGAT Board of Trustees has ultimate accountability and responsibility for policy management and compliance across the Trust, but the scrutiny, local adaptation and delivery of policies and guidance may be delegated to LGBs (LGBs), through their Scheme of Delegation. Oversight of the way in which LGBs deal with and implement the requirements of the policy lies with the Trust Board, who is responsible for ensuring compliance with the requirements of each policy implemented.

The Scheme of Delegation is essential in ensuring that policy management is understood and delivered at all levels across the Trust. Through the Scheme of Delegation, the Trust Board specifies the role and responsibilities expected from LGBs and schools; acknowledging that LGBs in conjunction with teaching staff and senior leaders, are ideally placed to ensure that accurate, meaningful and deliverable policy scrutiny takes place within their own setting.

### **Reviewing policies**

It is important for the Trust to have a focused approach to policy management which enables them to maintain strategic oversight of policies and their implementation.

The Trust Board will ensure:

- That all statutory policies are in place at the school or within the Trust and its academies.
- That there is a sound, practical reason for implementing any non-statutory policy and they understand the reason for implementation.
- There is a LGB led process in place for reviewing non-statutory policies.
- A process exists for ensuring LGBs are notified of any updates to policies issued by the Trust Board – this is currently via the weekly Herald sent to all Headteachers and Chairs of Governors.

To ensure compliance the Trust Board has delegated co-ordination of a policy review schedule to the Central Team. They are responsible for tracking which policies are due for review and need attention, where there is new information, or when policies must be updated in line with new or existing statutory guidance.

### **Communicating policy compliance**

It is imperative that communication regarding policy compliance and management is effective, open and transparent, at all levels. This ensures that any requirement placed upon an individual or the Trust is understood, actioned and that policy compliance is achieved.

DGAT commits to ensuring that up-to-date policies and guidance are available and accessible on the Member's Area of the DGAT website and that any updates to policies will be communicated to schools via the weekly Herald and relevant forum meetings.

DGAT also produces and shares its Policy Arrangement and Guidance document with all Trust staff and LGBs which sets out clearly which Trust policies schools **must** adopt, and which the LGB has responsibility for ratifying locally. This can be found on the DGAT website.

### **Local context and considerations**

In some cases, policies or guidance require inclusion of local context to ensure local procedures are in line with the policies of other stakeholders or institutions involved.

As an example, a Trust-wide Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy should be amended locally to reflect issues pertinent to local risk or concerns around geographic or demographic context, e.g. rural community and farm machinery dangers, or areas where risks of radicalisation may be an issue.

Some policies require both Trust Board and school input to ensure that compliance is achieved and maintained.

### **Monitoring the implementation of policies**

A key aspect of the role of the Local Governing Board in policy management is monitoring the implementation and impact of key policies (as set out in the Scheme of Delegation). Local governors' role is not to ratify Trust-approved policies or to simply proofread policies supplied to or by the school.

It is the LGBs responsibility to ensure that all the correct policies are uploaded onto the school website and implement a process for enabling parents to request a paper copy of the information published on the website.

### **Ways the Clerk can support the LGB**

- Maintain up-to-date knowledge of what policies are required and where to find them on DGAT website.
- Refer local governors to the Scheme of Delegation when necessary.
- Remain up-to-date with and communicate policy or guidance updates from DGAT to the LGB
- Remind LGB to include local context considerations.
- Ensure local governors submit visit reports in a timely manner and that these refer to monitoring policy impact.
- Ensure local governors have enough time to read and review papers before a meeting by ensuring meeting papers are available at least 7 days in advance of the meeting.
- Work in conjunction with the school's leadership to ensure a robust policy summary is in place and policies are uploaded onto the school website as required.

## **6. Local governor appointments and elections**

### **LGB membership**

The membership for each LGB is set out in its Scheme of Delegation. Typically, each LGB will have the following roles:

### **Elected local governor roles**

Each LGB will have two parent local governor roles and one staff governor role. These roles are elected from either the school's parent body or staff body respectively. Each appointment is for a four-year term of office. [There are guidance and election documents and templates available on the DGAT website to support with the election process.](#)

For each parent or staff governor election a returning officer must be appointed. This is usually the clerk.

The returning officer has the following duties:

- To ensure elections are conducted in line with Trust guidance.
- To make certain that votes can be made by post, by hand or by electronic means. □ To arrange a secure location for nomination and ballot papers to be submitted □ To receive nomination forms.
- To invite nominees to observe the counting of votes.
- To count nomination forms and establish if a ballot is required.
- To ensure the counting of votes is undertaken in the presence of a witness.
- To ensure any spoilt ballot papers are discounted.
- To announce the results of the election to all interested parties.
- To re-count votes in the event of a tie.
- To draw lots in the event of a tie following a second count.

### **The election process**

Inform all staff or parents eligible to vote and be nominated of the vacancy using the [DGAT Notice of Staff Local Governor Vacancy Template Letter](#) or [DGAT Notice of Parent Local Governor Vacancy Template Letter](#). The letter includes a template for nominations, which must be completed by any staff member or parent wishing to self-nominate or be nominated for election.

The completed form is returned to the Returning Officer.

If more than one staff member or parent is nominated for election, conduct an election by secret ballot.

### **Ballot Process**

If more nominations than vacant posts are received, a ballot will need to be conducted. This could be a paper ballot or an electronic ballot, using MS Forms or SchoolPing. However you must offer paper ballot forms as well, if choosing to hold an electronic election, to ensure everyone has access to vote.

Elections will be by secret ballot. A secure ballot box will be made available at the school to collect returned paper ballot forms. If you choose to hold an electronic ballot there is guidance available on the DGAT members area.

Ensure that all employed members of staff or eligible parents at the school are given the opportunity to stand for election and vote in the election, consider how staff who may be

absent from work are able to participate in the election process or to make the process accessible for all parents eligible to vote.

Ensure sufficient timescales are implemented to allow for a fair election and accessible process.

### **Disqualification**

All nominees will be asked to sign a declaration of eligibility before any election is organised. This is included on the template letter sent notifying of an election.

### **Election Period**

The Returning Officer will determine the election period, and this should not exceed two weeks.

### **Count of votes/ballot papers**

The Returning Officer at the closing date for return of ballot papers should arrange for candidates and a member of the LGB to have the opportunity to be present at the verification and count of ballot papers. The number of ballot papers issued and returned should be recorded to monitor participation and verify the result.

The Returning Officer determines whether ballot papers are valid. Votes should be allowed where the voters' intention is clear. The election should be decided by a simple majority of votes cast. In the event of a tie the Chair of the LGB, in consultation with the trust HoGP, will determine which of the nominees' skill set will best complement the existing LGB.

### **Election paperwork**

All papers relating to the election (including disallowed ballot papers) should be kept securely for three months in case the election result is challenged.

### **Unopposed election**

In the event of the number of staff or parents standing for election not exceeding the number of vacancies, the nominees are elected automatically.

All parents will be informed in writing of the outcome of the election.

### **Administration**

The date of appointment is either the closing date for nominations where a candidate is elected unopposed or the date of the ballot if more candidates than vacancies were received. Where the school is newly opened following joining the Trust, the date of appointment will correspond to the date that the school changes status.

## **If no-one stands for election**

Please contact the HoGP to discuss next steps.

The Clerk is responsible for issuing the appointed local governor with:

- The [Staff or Parent Local Governor Appointment Letter](#)
- A copy of the [Local Governor Code of Conduct](#) for signing and return
- A copy of the [DGAT Declarations of Interest form](#) for completion and return
- Details of future meetings
- Details of how to set up their school email address
- Details of access to any membership services and the Local Governor area on the DGAT website
- Registration to GovernorHub
- Dates for the next DGAT New Local Governor Induction Training

## **Co-opted governor roles**

Co-opted local governors are appointed by the LGB by a majority decision at a LGB meeting.

The school's Scheme of Delegation details how many co-opted local governors the LGB must appoint. All co-opted local governors are appointed for a 4-year term of office.

A person who is employed at the academy cannot be appointed as a co-opted local governor if this results in the number of staff on the LGB exceeding one third of the total number of local governors (including the Headteacher/Principal)

Co-opted local governors who have come to the end of their term of office may be re-appointed.

Their willingness to stand again needs to be ascertained before the appointment process takes place.

### **The appointment process:**

The prospective local governor must complete the [DGAT Co-opted Local Governor Application](#) form and the [DGAT LGB Declaration of Eligibility Form](#). This form must be completed by prospective co-opted local governors and those seeking reappointment.

The consideration and decision to appoint, or re-appoint, a co-opted local governor must be an agenda item of a full LGB meeting. It is good practice to have this as an early item so that later items that need a vote are not impacted by issues of the meeting not being quorate.

N.B. The individual(s) being considered for appointment or re-appointment as a co-opted local governor should not be present during the meeting for this item.

The case for appointing, or re-appointing, an individual as a co-opted local governor needs to be put forward, often by the Chair, and the LGB should discuss the merits of this.

The LGB then votes whether, or not, to appoint or re-appoint. In the event of an equal division of votes the Chair has the casting vote. The LGB's decision must be minuted but it is not necessary to record individual governor's votes.

If the LGB decides not to re-appoint or appoint, then the LGB will need to seek replacements and follow the same process at a subsequent meeting.

The Co-opted local governor's term of office will commence from the date the last term expired if a re-appointment, or the date of the meeting where the appointment was made if a new appointment.

The Clerk is responsible for issuing the co-opted local governor with:

- The [Co-opted Local Governor Appointment Letter](#)
- A copy of the [Local Governor Code of Conduct](#) for signing and return
- A copy of the [DGAT Declarations of Interest form](#) for completion and return
- Details of future meetings
- Details of how to set up their school email address
- Details of access to any membership services and the Local Governor area on the DGAT website
- Registration to GovernorHub
- Dates for the next DGAT New Local Governor Induction Training

If the LGB decide not to appoint or re-appoint the Clerk should send the applicant the [DGAT Unappointed Local Governor Letter](#).

Please be aware that a co-opted local governor is not officially appointed until the vote concerning their appointment has taken place at an LGB meeting, until then they may attend LGB meetings with the permission of the LGB as an observer.

### **DGAT Trust appointed local governors**

Trust appointed local governors are appointed directly by DGAT. The Trust Board has delegated these appointments to the CEO and HoGP who welcome nominations from the LGB for this role.

The Scheme of Delegation details how many Trust appointed local governors the LGB must have – not all LGBs will have this role.

Trust appointed local governors who have come to the end of their term of office may be reappointed. Their willingness to stand again needs to be ascertained before the appointment process takes place.

### **The appointment process**

An individual being considered for appointment or re-appointment as a Trust appointed local governor must complete the [DGAT Trust Appointed Local Governor Application Form](#).

The completed form is returned to the HoGP and the consideration and decision whether or not to appoint or re-appoint is made by CEO and HoGP on behalf of the DGAT Trust Board.

The HoGP will issue an appointment/re-appointment letter to the Trust appointed local governor. A copy of the appointment letter will be sent to the Clerk and Chair.

The term of office will commence from the date the last term expired if a re-appointment, or the date of the decision to appoint for new appointments.

Please be aware that a Trust appointed local governor is not officially appointed until a letter of appointment has been received from the HoGP, until then they may attend LGB meetings with the permission of the LGB as an observer.

### **Foundation governors**

Church school LGB's within the Trust will always have Foundation Governors appointed by the Diocesan Board of Education, this includes the Ex-officio Foundation Governor role which is reserved for the parish incumbent. If the parish is in vacancy, then the relevant Archdeacon can approve the appointment of a Substitute Ex-officio Foundation Governor.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) nominates Foundation Governors, and the DBE Foundation Governor appointment panel makes the final decision. This process and the process for seeking the appointment or re-appointment of a Foundation Governor or a Substitute Ex-officio Foundation Governor is led by the Diocesan Education Team (DET) and guidance and applications forms can be found here:

<https://gloucester.anglican.org/schools/leadership-and-governance/>

On appointment, the DET will write an appointment letter to the Foundation Governor, copying in the Clerk and PCC secretary. The letter will include an invitation to the DET Foundation Governor Welcome Session. The Clerk should ensure that in addition to this, the appointed or re-appointed Foundation Governor undertakes all relevant DGAT local governor training, including the DGAT New Local Governor Induction training.

It is important that the Clerk updates the DET and DGAT HoGP of any Foundation Governor resignations or vacancies.

### **Post-appointment actions and induction**

The Chair of the LGB should ensure a local induction commences an induction process, including any required training. [A Local Governor Local Induction template is available on the DGAT website.](#)

The clerk to the LGB should forward the following documents to the HoGP within 14 days of any local governor's appointment:



- A copy of the appointed person's nomination form
- A copy of the appointed person's appointment Letter

The clerk should retain copies for the LGB's own records and store securely in line with Data Protection requirements and GDPR.

The Chair of the LGB must ensure that the appointed Local Governor's Section 128 check and DBS check is completed within 21 days of appointment and confirm either completion or non-completion via email to the HoGP within 14 working days.

All terms of office will be for four years and will commence from the date of the election or appointment.

## 7. Complaints

The Clerk may receive notification of a parental complaint or request for a complaint review meeting. In this instance, please contact the HoGP without delay and before acknowledging receipt of the complaint for support and further guidance.

## 8. Key contacts

There is a great deal of support available to you in your role. Here are some key contacts that are there to help.

Nicki Wadley, the Trust HoGP is your first point of contact and can be reached at [nwadley@cen.dgat.org.uk](mailto:nwadley@cen.dgat.org.uk) or on 07818 360447.

Vicki Cowan, Governance and People Administrator can be reached at [vcowan@cen.dgat.org.uk](mailto:vcowan@cen.dgat.org.uk) or on 07979 833086.

For all enquiries relating to the appointment or re-appointment of Foundation Governors, please contact the Diocesan Education Team at [schoolsgovernance@glosdioc.org.uk](mailto:schoolsgovernance@glosdioc.org.uk)

If you need support with GovernorHub, please use the chat function on the website here: <https://app.governorhub.com/news> just click on this icon at the bottom right of the GovernorHub home page to open the chat function.

