

New Local Governor

Handbook

2024-2025

Our vision is to enable all to flourish

A group of trees with no leaves

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### **1.0 Welcome and introduction**

Congratulations on your new role as a local governor with the Diocese of Gloucester Academies Trust (DGAT) at [insert name of school]! You have joined the largest group of volunteers in the UK and your contribution will influence the future of many young people. We thank you for your commitment to support the Trust and its family of schools.

We understand that new local governors will have many questions and may initially be reluctant or nervous to ask questions at a meeting. We have tried to highlight the most common questions new local governors have and provide answers using clear terminology. If you have any questions which aren’t covered here then please contact your mentor, Chair of Governors, Head of Governance and People or Governance and People Administrator at the DGAT central office. You can find contact details for these people on the next page.

You can learn more about the Trust and how we work on the [DGAT website](https://www.dgat.org.uk/_files/ugd/5708ae_360ad6cdd5064607880f5facc5b379f0.pdf) The school website is also a valuable resource for you to explore the school, its vision and values and information shared with its community. You can visit the school website here: [insert link].

A person smiling in front of a castle

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A person smiling in front of a building

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 A close up of a name

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Nicki Wadley Vicki Cowan

Head of Governance and People Governance and People Administrator

### **2.0 Who’s who**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| DGAT  Head of Governance and People | Nicki Wadley | [nwadley@cen.dgat.org.uk](mailto:nwadley@cen.dgat.org.uk)  01452 835597  07818 360447 | Support and help for all governors, including training and induction course and resources. Ensures effective governance across DGAT |
| DGAT other Governance support job | Vicki Cowan | [vcowan@cen.dgat.org.uk](mailto:vcowan@cen.dgat.org.uk)  07979833086 | Governance and People Administrator providing administrative support to Head of Governance and People. |
| Headteacher (HT) |  |  | Responsible for leading and managing the school’s journey, both strategically and day to day. Support for governors’ school visits including monitoring. |
| School Business Manager (SBM) |  |  | Safeguarding including DBS and similar checks, sets up email. |
| Chair of Governors |  |  | Leads the Local Governing Board (LGB) in ensuring governors meet their responsibilities via the scheme of delegation. |
| Clerk to the Governors |  |  | Responsible for organising and minuting LGB and any Panel meetings. Sets up GovernorHub. First point of contact for answering questions concerning procedural matters, and issues relating to governance processes and the scheme of delegation. They will also help you get set up and running as a new governor. First point of call if you’re stuck with something. |
| Your local governor mentor |  |  | Will contact you to discuss what kind of support you would like. |

## Meet the other governors:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Vice Chair |  |  |
| **(Add in as necessary names, roles and responsibilities of the LGB)** |  |  |
|  |  |  |

### **3.0 What is the role?**

Local governing boards (LGBs) provide local strategic leadership for the DGAT family of schools and are responsible for providing local oversight for safeguarding practice and processes, the overall performance of the school and the educational outcomes for all groups of pupils who attend the school. Local governing boards are also delegated responsibility for ensuring the school’s Christian distinctiveness is maintained and embedded in all aspects of school life.

Local governance is a collective responsibility, and local governors should contribute based on their individual skillset, knowledge and experience. The Trust Board delegates responsibilities to local governing boards through the scheme of delegation. The scheme of delegation provides a blueprint for accountability throughout the Trust and is an important reference point for all local governors. This document will be shared with you as part of your induction and is discussed at the Trust New Local Governor Induction training.

All local governors should be prepared to question and be professionally curious, this is a key aspect of holding school leaders to account. New local governors are a valuable resource for schools and governing boards; they can provide a fresh perspective, bring up-to-date information, and question embedded practices.

A key responsibility of new local governors is asking questions to ensure their understanding develops for them to get to the know the school, its strengths and development needs and what effective governance looks like. It is recommended that new governors are assigned a mentor to act as a point of contact for questions to be asked.

All local governors have a responsibility to prepare effectively for meetings by reading all paperwork distributed and planning any questions arising from their preparation.

### **4.0 What information will I have to provide?**

Everyone involved in the governance of schools, including local governing boards in academy trusts must provide information to the DfE to be listed on [Get information about schools](https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/) (GIAS).

Only local governors’ personal names are published on GIAS and publicly available. All new local governors are required to undertake an enhanced DBS check, within 21 days of appointment,

### **5.0 What support should I expect?**

The chair should be happy to meet you and discuss the role further, and to arrange for you to visit the school, introducing you to the Headteacher and school staff. Once you decide to take on the role and have been appointed, the LGB and clerk will help you to settle in quickly and make sure you can be effective from day one. You should be appointed a mentor within the LGB to help you in your role and with any questions you may have. It is recommended that your mentor meets with you before and after your first meeting so you can ask any questions or gain context around the discussions taking place.

### **6.0 How much time will it take?**

When you start the role we will ask you to complete some mandatory training, complete some required forms and read some important key documents. This is detailed below together with our estimate of the time needed.

All local governors will be expected to attend full local governing board meetings. The number of meetings per academic year will vary school-to-school but this information should have been shared with you prior to your appointment.

Many local governing boards also delegate some of their function to committees, and local governors are usually asked to sit on at least one of the committees. DGAT local governing boards, unless otherwise agreed with the Head of Governance and People, are required to have a Finance and Resources Committee and it is strongly recommended that a Standards and Ethos committee is established. Membership of committees will be based on the skills and expertise of local governors, and new local governors may be asked to complete a skills audit to establish where their skills would be best used. There may be between three and six committee meetings to attend per year as well as full board meetings.

### **7.0 What will I be expected to do in addition to attending meetings?**

Some local governing boards also allocate link governor roles – these roles may be linked to subjects or identified priority areas. If a local governor is allocated a link role, they will be expected to carry out monitoring visits throughout the course of the year. Support can be given for this by shadowing another governor such as your mentor. The purpose of these visits is to oversee what is being done in school in relation to the link area and the impact of any initiatives which have been implemented.

Local governors may also be asked to attend specific school events such as parents’ evenings or information evenings – they may also be invited to attend school social events and attending these will certainly help new local governors to get to know their school.

There is an expectation that local governors take responsibility for keeping themselves up-to-date, so there may be some reading, research or training to be undertaken outside of meetings. The Trust publishes a governance Briefing six times a year and this is essential reading for all local governors. Please do discuss this with your mentor and/or the Chair of Governors if you have specific skills you’d like to use.

### **8.0 What should I do if I am unable to attend a meeting?**

Apologies for absence at a meeting should be sent as early as possible to the Clerk. At the meeting, the local governing board will be asked to decide whether to accept the apologies, so it is important a reason for non-attendance is provided.

Local governors who have failed to attend any full governing board meetings within a six-month period, without permission or accepted apologies, will be disqualified.

### **9.0 How long is my term of office?**

The usual term of office for all local governors is four years. At the end of each local governors’ term of office, local governors may choose to stand for re-election or appointment to the LGB for a further four-year term or may choose to stand down. Local governors seeking re-election will be asked to provide a short statement indicating why they wish to be re-appointed, the impact they have had and the impact they consider they can further bring to the LGB.

Foundation governors seeking re-appointment must follow the process set by the [Diocese of Gloucester Education Team](https://gloucester.anglican.org/schools/leadership-and-governance/).

In the event of their child leaving the school, local parent governors may continue to the end of their term of office.

Staff governors may continue to serve on the governing board for their full term, or until their employment at the school ends.

The Headteacher and Ex-Officio Foundation Governors are permanently members of the LGB until they decide to leave their job.

### **10.0 What key documents should I read?**

There are a number of key documents which new local governors should familiarise themselves with to help them understand their role and be effective and compliant in local governance. These documents are updated on a regular basis and you should ensure you read the most up-to-date version available. New local governors should take care not to overwhelm themselves with reading too much information too quickly. Your Chair of Governors or mentor can direct you to the priority information to read.

[Academy Trust Governance Guide](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/-governance-in-academy-trusts) A guidance document from the DfE setting out the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed for effective governance. This will help you understand the role of the Trust Board as the accountable body for governance within he Trust.

[Keeping Children Safe in Education](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2): Statutory guidance for all school leaders which should be given full regard when carrying out child protection and safeguarding duties. All local governors should read part one and two and annex B, as a minimum, but it is recommended that all local governors read and refer to the whole guidance to ensure compliance and to commit due regard to the board’s safeguarding responsibilities.

These two documents are regularly referred to during meetings and they will become more familiar as you continue in your role. There is no expectation to read them all and try to absorb all the content.

**Terms of reference:** Terms of reference are, essentially, blueprints outlining the structure and purpose of a local governance panel, committee, or board. They evidence a framework that local governors can be held accountable to and increase efficiency and effectiveness of local governors by clarifying their roles and remits. This can be found [insert location].

**School Development Plan (SDP**): New local governors should also familiarise themselves with the SDP. The SDP provides a strategic plan for school improvement and should collate the school’s priorities, the key outcomes it intends to achieve, and the main measures it will take to achieve the targets. Becoming familiar with this document will enable new local governors to get up-to-speed with the strength and developmental needs of the school. This can be found [insert location].

**Local Governors’ Code of Conduct**: The local governing board code of conduct outlines the responsibilities of local governors, as well as what is expected of the local governing board in terms of behaviour and commitment to their roles. This can be found [insert location].

**Minutes of previous board and committee meetings:** Reading previous minutes will help new governors gain context for future meetings and establish a view of the school at the present time. These can be found [insert location].

**School Self-evaluation Form (SEF) Summary**: Becoming familiar with the SEF summary will assist new local governors to understand how school leaders evaluate the performance and effectiveness of the school in key areas, such as leadership and management, pupil behaviours and welfare and pupil outcomes. There is no standard format for an SEF to be written in, so they will vary from school- to-school. This can be found [insert location].

**Latest Ofsted Inspection Report**: Whilst it is useful for new local governors to gain an external perspective of the school’s and governors’ performance from the latest Ofsted report, they should remain mindful that the school may have moved on or, in some circumstances, performance may have changed. It is therefore important that new governors consider the report in collaboration with the current SDP and SEF. The school’s latest Ofsted report can be found [insert location].

**Latest SIAMS Inspection Report (if your school is a CofE school):** All Church of England dioceses and the Methodist Church use the Church of England Education Office's framework for the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The SIAMS Evaluation Schedule sets out the expectations for the conduct of the Statutory Inspection of Anglican, Methodist and ecumenical Schools under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.SIAMS inspection focuses on the impact of the Church school's Christian vision on pupils and adults. This involves evaluating the impact of the school’s distinctive Christian vision, the provision the school makes because of this vision and how effective this provision is in enabling all pupils to flourish. The school’s most recent SIAMS report can be found [insert location].

**Scheme of Delegation:** The Academies Trust Handbook requires the Trust Board to publish a scheme of delegation. A scheme of delegation details clearly the levels of delegation for any decisions which need to be made. The Trust Board does not need to be responsible for all decisions – there are several decisions and responsibilities which can be delegated to individuals or committees. Our school’s scheme of delegation can be found [insert location].

**Policies:** There will be a number of key policies that you should read as a new local governor. The Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy is a key policy to read early in your induction process. It is also important to read and become familiar with the school’s Financial Procedures Policy, Health and Safety Policy and Conflicts of Interest Policy. Ask the person facilitating your induction which other policies should be read. All Trust policies can be found in the members area of the DGAT website under Local Governance, Trust Policies.

### **11.0 Am I able to claim expenses for my work as a local governor?**

The role of a local governor is purely voluntary. DGAT has a Local Governors and Trustees Expenses Policy in place and new local governors should expect a copy of the policy to be provided on commencement of their role. Allowances for expenses are set out in the policy. The Governors and Trustees Expenses Policy can be found in the local governance members’ area on the DGAT website.

### **12.0 Am I entitled to time off from work to carry out my local governor duties?**

Employers should allow reasonable time off for employees to carry out public duties such as being a school governor.

Employers can choose whether they pay their employees for time off for public duties; however, there is no legal requirement for them to do so. New local governors should instigate discussions around what constitutes reasonable time off to perform local governor duties and focus on the transferable skills to employment from their local governor duties.

## **13.0 Getting Started**

Once you’re appointed, a lot of things happen! Here’s a checklist to ensure you know what to expect and who to contact if something hasn’t happened. The LGB will ensure your local governance induction is completed, and the New Local Governor Induction training will focus on providing support to get to know the Trust and provide training to get you started in your role.

## **14.0 Getting set up**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| What? | Who? | When? | Done? |
| Let the SBM have the following details:  • Full name (to include title)  • Address | Clerk – you will have provided this information on your application form. | As soon as possible – it will be needed for everything from school email to safeguarding checks, and access to systems | Date:  -------------- |
| Three forms of identification including one with photo id for a DBS check. | SBM | As soon as possible after your details have been provided. | Date:  -------------- |
| School email set up is secure and must be used for all communications related to governor business | SBM | As soon as possible after your details have been provided. | Date:  -------------- |
| Access to GovernorHub – this is one of the key systems where you’ll record everything from training to visits, and can access all the documents you need. [What is GovernorHub? | GovernorHub Help Centre](https://help.governorhub.com/en/articles/5567586-what-is-governorhub) has an introduction to the website, which is online. | Clerk | As soon as possible after your email is set up. | Date:  -------------- |
| Access to DGAT Local governance section of website  [www.dgat.org.uk](http://www.dgat.org.uk)  Under members  Local governance  Password: DANIEL | Clerk | As soon as possible after your email has been set up. |  |
| Signposted to school website, in particular vision and values | Clerk | As soon as possible after your email is set up. |  |
| Signposted to read Scheme of Delegation and Terms of reference for LGB | Clerk | As soon as possible after your email is set up. |  |

## **15.0 Training and development opportunities**

There are some basic training requirements which have to be completed once you’re appointed. Once you’ve completed a piece of training please let the Clerk know (and attach your certificate) and update your profile on GovernorHub.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| What? | Who? | How long? | When? | Done? |
| **Online Prevent Course** – this is a UK government provided course, accessed here:  http://www.support-people-vulnerable-to-radicalisation.service.gov.uk/portal#awareness-course | You | 30-40 min  online | As soon as possible | Date:  -------------- |
| **Cyber Security Training** – this is a YouTube video to watch here:  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pP2VKWSagE0 | You | 40 min online | As soon as possible | Date:  -------------- |
| **DGAT new Governors Induction** course – this is an in-person course facilitated by the Head of Governance and Governance and People Administrator. You can check dates and book your place here:  <https://www.dgat.org.uk/cpdl-and-events> | You | 5 hours in person – split evening sessions are available | As soon as possible | Date:  -------------- |
| **DGAT Whole School Safeguarding training** course – this is online run by the Trust. You can check dates and book on here:  <https://www.dgat.org.uk/cpdl-and-events> | You | 2 hours online | As soon as possible | Date:  -------------- |

## **16.0 Checks and compliance**

As well as training, we’ll need to get some checks done (for safeguarding purposes) and you’ll need to read and agree to abide by some documents.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| What? | Who? | When? | Done? |
| **Enhanced DBS and Section 128 Safeguarding checks** – this will be something you complete online, and then meet with the SBM to show them your proof of ID documents | SBM/you | Within one month of being appointed | Date:  -------------- |
| **Read and confirm you’ve read, understood “Keeping Children Safe In Education” document** **Parts 1 and 2 and Annex B.** – this is a national requirement. The document is online here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>  You should record your compliance confirmation on the Compliance section of your profile on GovernorHub | You | Within one month of being appointed | Date:  -------------- |
| **Read and confirm you understand and will abide by the DGAT Governor Code of Conduct document** – this is on the DGAT web site, here:  <https://www.dgat.org.uk/policies-and-resources>  To make your confirmation of compliance, see section “Compliance” on GovernorHub | You | Within one month of being appointed | Date:  -------------- |
| **Read and confirm you understand the DGAT Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy document** – this is on the DGAT web site, here:  <https://www.dgat.org.uk/policies-and-resources>  To make your confirmation of compliance, see section “Compliance” on GovernorHub | You | Within one month of being appointed | Date:  -------------- |
| **Read and confirm you understand the Governor and Trustee Privacy notice**  To make your confirmation of compliance, see section “Compliance” on GovernorHub | You | Within one month of being appointed | Date:  -------------- |
| **Read and confirm you understand the Terms of Reference for the LGB**  To make your confirmation of compliance, see section “Compliance” on GovernorHub | You | Within one month of being appointed | Date:  -------------- |
| **Read and confirm you understand the Local Governor Visit Protocol**  To make your confirmation of compliance, see section “Compliance” on GovernorHub | You | Within one month of being appointed | Date:  -------------- |
| **Register any interests** – you must declare business and pecuniary interests that might affect your ability to make impartial decisions. For example, you must record:   * being a trustee or governor at another school or charity. * membership of any church council or parish councils * having a relative who supplies services to the school/trust. * a close personal relationship with a member of staff. * If you have a child at the school you are a governor at and what year group they are in.   You can record these (or no interests) on the “Compliance” section on GovernorHub. We’ll also check every meeting of the LGB. | You | Within one month of being appointed | Date:  -------------- |
| **Complete the LGB skills audit**  This must be completed annually by all governors. It allows the LGB to see where there are training needs and the individual strengths of the local governors.  Your clerk will send this to you to complete. | You | Within one month of being appointed | Date:  -------------- |

## **17.0 LGB Meetings**

The Clerk will be in touch once you’ve got a school email address with the dates of the meetings for the LGB and any committees over the current academic year. All the minutes and papers for previous meetings are in the “documents” section of GovernorHub. The Clerk will publish minutes within two weeks of the meeting and put out the agenda and associated papers one week before the meeting whenever possible. If you have items for the agenda, please let the Clerk know – it’s always better to have these in advance. The meetings will last around two hours maximum.

## **18.0 Visiting the school**

We’re really keen to encourage all local governors to visit the school and help to monitor progress, and the Headteacher will coordinate and facilitate this. We’d encourage you to plan in one visit to monitor a specific area. Local governors are encouraged to visit at least twice a year. There is the [DGAT Local Governor Visits protocol](https://www.dgat.org.uk/_files/ugd/5708ae_360ad6cdd5064607880f5facc5b379f0.pdf) you are required to read before carrying out any monitoring visits.

There are monitoring report forms and example questions to ask on the DGAT website under the Local Governance section. You may wish to accompany another governor for your first monitoring visit, you could ask your governor mentor or please get in touch with Nicki Wadley or Vicki Cowan who would be happy to assist.

## **19.0 Ongoing training**

The Trust offer a variety of free training for local governors to provide support in their role. These are listed every year in the annual [CPDL calendar](https://www.dgat.org.uk/cpdl-and-events). This can be found on the DGAT website. You can book direct for any session via the calendar. If you do complete additional training, please do let the Clerk know and record it, together with your certificate, on GovernorHub.

New local governors have a responsibility to undertake any training or CPD needed to complete their role effectively and maintain compliance with governance regulations.

### **20.0 Next steps**

The first recommended step is to identify who your mentor is and arrange a time to meet with them.

Secondly, enjoy your role. Stay curious, commit to your own CPD and remember to always ask yourself ‘what if we do/don’t do this or make this decision?’, ‘how will this benefit the pupils?’ and ‘how will this decision impact on the wellbeing and workload of the staff team?’

If you need any advice or help with any aspect of the role please do not hesitate to get in touch with either Nicki Wadley or Vicki Cowan.