

# GOVERNOR HEADLINES

Welcome to issue #23 of Governor Headlines. This edition includes information on co-option to Suffolk County Council's Scrutiny Committee and school admissions arrangements for 2020/2021. We also offer guidance on the information you should be publishing online, safeguarding and skills checks that should be carried out for governors and how to manage confidentiality in your governing body.

As always, if you have any thoughts or suggestions regarding Governor Headlines please contact [governorheadlines@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:governorheadlines@suffolk.gov.uk).

## What's New This Month – April 2019

### Co-option to the Scrutiny Committee

As you may be aware an email was sent to all parent governors of Local Authority maintained schools on Tuesday 2 April 2019 with a [letter](#) detailing the two vacancies for **Parent Governor Representatives** on the Scrutiny Committee of Suffolk County Council.

The Scrutiny Committee is responsible for scrutinising public sector activity in Suffolk. The Committee gathers evidence from a wide variety of people, including council employees, councillors, customers and service users, partner organisations and other experts, assesses it impartially and makes recommendations to decision makers as to how services could be improved.

We are looking for **two parent governors of LA maintained schools** who can attend the Committee when it is considering matters relating to education, to represent the views of parents in an apolitical way.

Examples of topics directly relating to children and young people that the Committee has considered recently are:

- Provision of youth services – gangs and county lines in Suffolk
- Cost pressures in Children and Young People's Services
- The County Council's role in tackling domestic abuse

The Scrutiny Committee is also planning to consider:

- Elective Home Education (scheduled for Thursday 6 June 2019)
- The Council's response to the increasing number of children with high needs.
- Employment support for young people

Please find below further information on the role and a nomination form:

[Information Document](#)

[Nomination Form](#)

Nominations should be submitted to the Leadership and Governance Team by Friday 17th May 2019. If more than two nominations are received, an election will be held.

If you have any queries please contact Suffolk County Council Democratic Services on Telephone: 01473 265119 or Email: [committee.services@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:committee.services@suffolk.gov.uk) .

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## School Admissions Arrangements for 2020/2021

The admission arrangements to all mainstream schools in Suffolk for the 2020/2021 school year are now on the county council's website,

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/schools/school-places/admissions-to-schools-in-suffolk-for-the-20202021-school-year/>.

Any objections to these arrangements must be made to the Schools Adjudicator by **15 May 2019**. Further information is available on the Schools Adjudicator's website at [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-of-the-schools-adjudicator](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-of-the-schools-adjudicator).

For further information or queries please contact Jan Scott, Senior Infrastructure Officer (Admissions & Transport) at [jan.scott@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:jan.scott@suffolk.gov.uk) or on 01473 264657.

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## Safeguarding and Skills Checks for Governors

Governing bodies should be carrying out checks on all prospective new candidates and all governors who are due for reappointment, both for safeguarding purposes and to ensure that you are consistently appointing the best possible candidates.

A DBS check should be carried out for all new governors before appointment and references obtained from 2 referees supplied by the candidate. Referees should have known the candidate for no fewer than 2 years and ideally be people who have known the candidate in a professional capacity. If 2 professional references are not possible 1 personal referee can be used, however they should not be related to the candidate. An example of our reference request form can be found [here](#).

DBS information and references should be stored securely with the school. If your candidate has been a governor previously, they may already have held a DBS in another school, in which case you will need to establish whether this remains valid or whether a new DBS check should be carried out.

It is also good practice for candidates to complete a Skills Matrix so that you can ensure they have the right skills for your particular governing body. Current governors should also complete a Skills Matrix on an annual basis to ensure that the governing body has the right combination of skills and to identify any areas of weakness that would benefit from training. A copy of our skills matrix can be found [here](#), you may like to use or adapt this or create your own.

It shouldn't be taken for granted that current governors will be reappointed at the end of their term if they want to be. In the case of staff and parent governors, the appropriate body (i.e. staff members or parents) need to be informed of the upcoming vacancy and given the opportunity to nominate themselves for the role. The governor whose term is ending is very welcome to nominate themselves but, if more than one nomination is received, an election must take place.

Consideration must also be given to co-opted and community governors seeking reappointment. How strongly have they contributed to the governing body during their current term and what positive impact have they had upon the school? A governing body's direction and priorities can change dramatically over the course of a governor's standard 4-year term-of-office, if this person applied for appointment as a new governor would you decide to appoint them? During the reappointment process for LA governors (a reminder of which can be found below) we ask the governor concerned to complete a statement of impact which is taken into consideration when deciding whether to approve their reappointment. You may like to ask co-opted and community governors for something similar.

We appreciate that it may be easier to reappoint a long-standing governor than identify a new candidate, however governor appointments should always be made in the best interests of the school and its pupils. It may be that you reappoint a governor on the understanding that they will complete a certain training course, or you may even decide that they would be better suited to a position as an associate member instead.

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LA Appointment Process Reminder

There have been a few queries recently on the appointment of Local Authority governors and so we thought we'd use this opportunity to remind you of the appointment process for both new LA governor candidates and LA governors seeking reappointment.

In both cases the candidate needs to have their nomination approved by our Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills before they can be formally appointed by the governing body. Individuals who are appointed onto the governing body in the LA position before having their nomination approved by us are not legal governors.

### **New Candidates:**

New LA governor candidates can be identified by either the Local Authority or the governing body. If we identify a candidate we ask them to complete an application form which you will be able to review. Ideally you would also meet with or speak to the candidate prior to the approval of their nomination. If the candidate is identified by the governing body you will need to inform our Leadership and Governance Team at [governance@suffolk.co.uk](mailto:governance@suffolk.co.uk) or by calling 01473 263943 and providing us with the candidate's contact details so that we can ask them to complete an application.

We will then collect references and a short statement from the Chair of Governors before sending this over to the Cabinet Member to review. The candidate and Chair of Governors will be informed of the Cabinet Member's decision and, if their nomination has been approved, the candidate will be issued with a date of appointment which should be ratified at the following full governing body meeting.

### **LA Governors Seeking Reappointment:**

We will contact all LA governors a few weeks before the end of their current term, asking whether they want to be reappointed. If so we ask the LA governor to complete a statement of impact detailing the positive impact they have had on the governing body during their current term, the responsibilities they have held and the training that they have completed. We will also collect supporting statements from the Headteacher and Chair of Governors, or Vice-Chair where appropriate. This information is then sent to our Cabinet Member and a letter is then sent to the governor concerned, and to the Chair of Governors, advising of the outcome. If the reappointment has been approved we again provide the governor with a new date of appointment which will usually be the day after the end of their current term. This will then need to be ratified at the next full governing body meeting.

Please note that the process for reappointments is the same for governors that want to move from a current position such as parent or co-opted governor to the LA position.

If you would like further clarification on the process, have identified a candidate, or think your LA governor might not have been properly appointed please contact Emma Eynon at [governance@suffolk.co.uk](mailto:governance@suffolk.co.uk) or 01473 263943.

## Managing Governing Body Confidentiality

Governing bodies have a duty to maintain confidentiality and should consider, after each full governing body and committee meeting, which information should be considered confidential. Examples of this would be items not made available in the public minutes, such as those relating to specific pupils, parent or individual members of staff.

Local Authority Maintained schools are required to have a code of conduct which lays out the expectations of the governor role and governor's behaviour. It is good practice for the code of conduct to include a statement on confidentiality, both on how to uphold it whilst a governor and how to maintain it once a governance role has ended. The code of conduct should be agreed to annually and communicated to all prospective governors. Once approved the code of conduct applies to all governors.

In the event of a breach of confidentiality the Chair of Governors should hold an impartial investigation into any allegations made against the governor concerned and aim to understand the context of the potential breach in order to assess its impact. If it's found, or suspected, that a breach in confidentiality has led to a personal data breach the data protection officer for the school must be informed immediately.

Following investigation the Chair of Governor's should hold a meeting with the governor concerned to discuss any outcomes and decisions. The governor is entitled to bring someone with them to this meeting and another governor should be present to support the Chair.

If the breach was unintentional it may be decided that the governor needs to be better informed on how to uphold confidentiality and they may be asked to complete an appropriate training course.

If however the governor is found to have acted without integrity they could be suspended from their position or invited to resign. Further information on the code of conduct and the removal procedure for governors can be found in the Department for Education [Constitution Guidelines](#).

Governors that leave the governing body should be reminded of the agreed code of conduct and the confidentiality expectations for during and after their term-of-office. It is also the responsibility of the remaining governors to ensure that all appropriate parties are aware of the individual having left the governing body so that they are not sent meeting agendas or related governor correspondence. Our Leadership and Governance team should be made aware and the individual should be removed from GovernorHub if applicable. The governing body information should also be amended on the [Get Information About Schools \(GIAS\)](#) website.

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## What Governing Bodies Should Publish Online

Every Local Authority maintained school must publish certain information on its website in order to comply with [The School Information \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2012 and 2016](#). Information on what you need to publish can be found [here](#).

If your school is an academy or free school, you will need to check your funding agreement to find out what information you need to publish. An overview of the information the Department for Education recommends that you publish can be found [here](#).

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## Off-Rolling

### What is it and why is Ofsted looking for it?

The new Ofsted inspection framework includes guidelines for reviewing all forms of exclusion, including off-rolling.

Off-rolling is defined by Ofsted as ‘the practice of removing a pupil from the school roll without a formal, permanent exclusion or by encouraging a parent to remove their child from the school roll, when the removal is primarily in the interests of the school rather than in the best interests of the pupil’.

A focus on school performance may cause schools to off-roll pupils that they feel will have a negative impact on their results and therefore off-rolling most typically occurs in secondary schools and affects pupils progressing from year 10 to year 11 in the middle of GCSE courses. It’s reported that between 2016 – 2017, 19,000 pupils dropped off school rolls by failing to progress from year 10 to year 11 in the same school.

It’s also been found that vulnerable pupils are most at risk of off-rolling, particularly those with SEN. 30% of the 19,000 pupils off-rolled had SEN and 54% qualified for free school meals. Many schools find it difficult to balance decreasing budgets with providing for pupils with SEN and may decide to off-rolle them instead. However, this isn’t always in the best interests of the pupil.

Ofsted is clear however that off-rolling isn’t the practice of formal exclusion: ‘There are many reasons why a school might remove a pupil from the school roll, such as when a pupil moves house or a parent decides (without coercion from the school) to home-educate their child. This is not off-rolling.’

If a school removes a pupil from the school roll due to a formal permanent exclusion and follows the proper processes, this is not off-rolling’.

Under Ofsted’s [proposed inspection handbook for 2019](#), if evidence of off-rolling is found during an inspection the school will likely be judged inadequate for its leadership and management.

Further examples of off-rolling can be found in Ofsted’s [guidance to inspectors](#) from September 2018, or in this [briefing paper](#) published by the House of Commons.

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## Updated Governance Handbook

### [Governance Handbook](#)

The Department for Education (DfE) have recently updated their Governance Handbook, the document which lays out the role and function of the governing body and what good governance should look like in academies, multi-academy trusts and maintained schools.

New additions to the handbook include: parental engagement, section 128 checks, training for clerks and reducing teacher workload.

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