



Westfield Nursery School  
Handbook for Governors

# Westfield Nursery School Governors Handbook





## Westfield Nursery School Handbook for Governors

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## Westfield Nursery School Handbook for Governors

### 1. Introduction

Welcome to the Handbook for governors of Westfield Nursery School. This handbook is the result of research into best practice in governance and discussion between Westfield Nursery governors and our Headteacher, Liz Collins. It presents our collective view of the role of Westfield Nursery governor and guidance on fulfilling that role responsibly and effectively. In short, the handbook is intended to summarise who we are and what we are expected to do. Please don't be put off by the size of this document it is a purely a guide for your information.

Ofsted defines the role of school governor as being:

- a) a 'critical friend' to the school;
- b) contributing to strategic management of the school;
- c) providing accountability for how the school is run.

The role of school governor is challenging and time-consuming. More than that, however, it is immensely rewarding. At Westfield Nursery we are striving to develop the role of governor as well as how we evaluate the effectiveness of our governing body in contributing to school improvement.

On that note, I would like to emphasise that this handbook is very much a working document. I aim for it to be updated annually to coincide with the start of each school year and I ask all governors to share their views on further advice and guidance that would benefit governance arrangements in our school.

Maxine Boyle  
Chair of Governors  
September 2020

### 2. List of Governors (as of September 2019)

Miss Maxine Boyle - Chair (Local Authority Governor)

Mr David Meredith - Vice Chair (Community Governor)

Miss Kristina Adams - (Parent Governor)

Mrs Pragna Patel- (Parent Governor)

Mrs Christine Begley - (Staff Representative)

Mrs Liz Collins - (Head Teacher)

#### **Clerk to the Governors**

Mrs Anne Cavendish





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### 3. New Governors: What you can expect

The Governing Body and Headteacher of Westfield Nursery School are committed to ensuring new governors are given the necessary information and support to fulfil their role with confidence. The process is an investment and a means of bringing new governors up to speed as quickly as possible, leading to more effective governance and retention of governors.

#### **Induction of New Governors**

##### **Purpose**

- To welcome new governors to the governing body and enable them to meet other members
- To encourage new governors to visit the school to experience its atmosphere and understand its ethos
- To meet the Headteacher, staff and children
- To explain the partnership between the Headteacher, school and governing body
- To explain the role and responsibilities of governors
- To give background material on the school and current issues
- To allow new governors to ask questions about their role and/or the school
- To explain how the governing body works

##### **New governors will:**

- Be welcomed to the governing body by the chair
- Be invited by the Headteacher to visit the school
- Have the opportunity to tour the school and meet staff and children
- Receive an informal briefing on the school from the Headteacher
- Be given information about training for governors and attend the 'Induction for New Governors' course

##### **New governors will receive:**

- The Department for Education' *A Guide to the Law for School Governors,* - available from <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/governance>
- The school's 'Handbook for Governors'
- The school prospectus
- Details of relevant governor training
- Dates for future governors' meetings
- Details of how to contact the other governors
- Details of how to contact the school including, the email address
- A calendar of school events
- Recent school newsletters

##### **New governors are also recommended to read:**

- The latest Ofsted report and action plan
- The schools Self Evaluation Form (SEF)
- The School Development Plan (SDP)
- Minutes of the previous two governing body and committee meetings



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### Further Information on School Governance and school finance regulations

The following is a list (by no means exhaustive!) of further sources of information governors may find helpful:

- GovernorLine 08000 722181 [www.governorline.info](http://www.governorline.info) (Free, confidential advice and information for governors)
- DfE guidance <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/governance>
- *School Governors Newsletter* (published by Central Bedfordshire County Council, circulated direct to governors via clerk)
- School Finance Regulations <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/schools-portal/finance/regulations/scheme.aspx>

#### 4. Governing Body Vision and Self Evaluation

As a governing body we are committed to evaluating our own effectiveness on an annual basis and we timetable this activity to take place in the summer term. The results of this evaluation feed into the school's Self Evaluation Form (SEF), the framework used by Ofsted to judge schools, and Westfield Nursery's own School Development Plan (SDP). We have also identified the need to discuss and agree our own sense of vision for our governing body in support of the school's overall vision and objectives.

#### 5. Governors' Roles

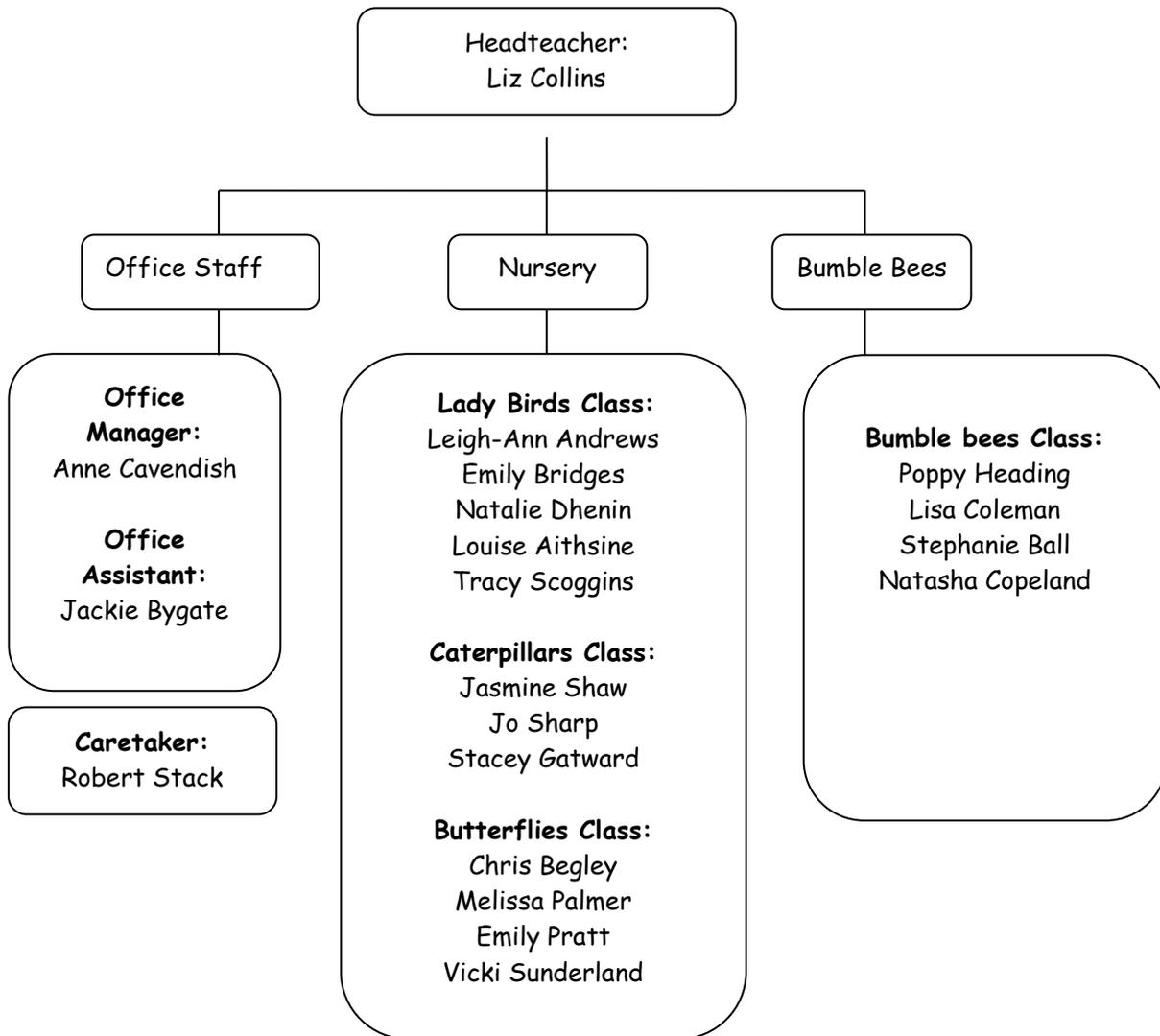
<b>Committee Member</b>	<b>Lead for</b>
Maxine Boyle David Meredith Kristina Adams Pragna Patel Chris Begley	Chair/ Safeguarding/ Health & Safety Vice Chair/ GDPR Curriculum and Assessment/ SEND
Maxine Boyle + 1	Headteacher's Performance Management Committee



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### 6. Staffing Structure of the School

#### Westfield Nursery School - Staff List





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### 7. A Code of Conduct for Governors

This code of conduct is designed to explain the basic principles of good governor conduct. It will be reviewed and ratified annually.

1. Governors should actively participate in discussions and decisions of the governing body.
2. School governors do not have any individual authority or power by being a member of the governing body, unless it has specifically been delegated; only the governing body as a whole can take actions or decisions, unless it has been agreed otherwise and formally minuted.
3. No Governor should use his or her position to gain advantage in any other relationships with the school or community (e.g. as an employee, parent or councillor).
4. The members of the governing body recognise that they administer a public body funded by local and national taxation. They therefore recognise that their proceedings should be open to public scrutiny, while recognising the need to retain confidentiality where individuals or groups are under discussion. Minutes will be available to parents on request. Requests to observe meetings will be considered with regard to the importance of the accountability of the governing body to the local community
5. All governors, however appointed or elected, recognise that they first and foremost have the good of the school at heart. They must always act and vote for the good of the school. Nevertheless, governors will sometimes have a duty to consider the significance of decisions for the source of their appointment during discussion on any item. Elected governors may need to consult with some or all of their elective bodies, and to initiate methods of gathering views on matters likely to be brought before the governors, where these are of a general nature or interest connected with the welfare of the school. This should be done only with the agreement of the full governing body, in accordance with governing body standing orders established for the purpose, and with regard to any conditions of confidentiality. When consulting, governors should ensure that they are gathering and reflecting views representative of the entire elective body, not just a small sub-section.
6. No governor may be mandated by his or her elective or appointing body under any circumstances, i.e. no governor can be instructed how to vote, to hold an opinion or to do anything by the body that elected or appointed him or her.
7. All governors are of equal standing; no governor will be excluded from any proceedings except where it is required by the statutory regulations.
8. Most governors have other relationships with the school, such as employee or parent. They should be particularly careful to ensure that these relationships are conducted in a proper and ethical manner, and that their standing as a governor is not compromised or open to misinterpretation.
9. Governors will attend meetings punctually and well prepared as far as possible, having read supporting material and considered the contributions they may make on agenda items.
10. Governors will be careful not to take part in governing body discussions where conflicts may arise with their interests outside membership of the governing body.
11. Governors will not use any material learned at meetings for other purposes, and no item designated as confidential will be discussed outside the governing body.
12. Governors accept collective responsibility for the decisions of the governing body.
13. Governors will consider what individual skills, personal qualities and knowledge they possess, and put them to use for the good for the school.



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### 8. A Meetings Charter

The Meetings Charter will be reviewed and ratified annually. It is designed to aid the governing body in fostering a culture of frank and open discussion that is both supportive and appropriately challenging. The Charter aims to remind Governors of good meeting behaviour.

<b>I expect:</b>	<b>Others can expect me:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a clear agenda and relevant documents and these to reach me before the meeting;</li><li>• an adequate room and appropriate seating;</li><li>• a clear understanding of the purpose(s) of the meeting;</li><li>• people to be punctual;</li><li>• a chair who is sympathetic, keeps to the agenda, paces the meeting so that time is given to each matter in proportion to its importance, draws on all members for contributions, keeps discussion to the point;</li><li>• people to tolerate a variety of views and opinions;</li><li>• my contribution to be heard and others to contribute to the discussion;</li><li>• a clear decision-making process;</li><li>• members to work together and to want discussions to be fruitful;</li><li>• a minuted record of views expressed and decisions reached.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• to have read the agenda, minutes and other papers, and noted the items I want to say something about;</li><li>• to have the papers and my notes at the meeting;</li><li>• to be punctual;</li><li>• to make relevant contributions;</li><li>• to listen to and consider what others say;</li><li>• to accept my share of the collective responsibility.</li></ul>

### 9. Job Description and Person Specification - Westfield Governor

Governing is a job – it just isn't paid! It is perhaps even more important for voluntary jobs than for paid ones to be clear about the parameters, expectations and limitations. It is important that the job description allows Governors varying types of commitment – there are many different ways of being a successful Governor.

**Governing Body Tasks**



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The principal tasks of a Governing Body are:

- planning: setting aims, objectives, principles and targets for the school; devising and overseeing policies and procedures;
- monitoring: using the Headteacher's report, visits, committees, attachment to areas of the school, questionnaires to ensure that the school is doing what the Governing Body planned it should do;
- evaluating: using success criteria to ensure that the school and its pupils are achieving what the Governing Body planned they should achieve;
- executive functions: recruiting and selecting staff, and other employment functions; managing the budget; managing the premises; enabling inspection;
- accounting/representing/communicating: liaising with the Local Authority, consulting and communicating with, and reporting to, parents.

### ***Job Description***

#### **School Governor Westfield Nursery School**

Responsible to: Chair of Governors

- Attend meetings regularly, having read supporting paperwork and be prepared to make an active contribution
- Visit the school and write reports of formal visits
- Take on a lead role
- Be linked to at least one area of the school's work
- Participate in executive decisions of the Governing Body
- Undertake training and development and share learning with fellow governors
- Work within an agreed code of conduct
- Represent the school within the local community
- Represent the local community on the Governing Body
- Maintain confidentiality as required

### ***Person Specification:***

- Caring
- Believes in state education
- Committed to the values of the school
- Prepared to give time, including during the day
- Willingness to undergo training and development
- Prepared to work as a member of a team
- Willing to contribute to school development and improvement
- Reliable
- Honest



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### 10. Job Descriptions – Chair & Vice Chair of Governors

The job descriptions for Chair and Vice-Chair are not exhaustive lists of duties and responsibilities but are intended to highlight the main responsibilities of these two posts, which should take a shared, open approach to leadership of the Governing Body.

#### ***Job Description***

#### **Chair of Governors, Westfield Nursery School**

Responsible for: School Governors

- Construct and agree the agenda for meetings, together with the Headteacher and clerk
- Plan and keep good order in meetings
- Ensure Governors' participation in and between meetings
- Ensure all decisions are understood and that necessary action is taken
- Ensure Governors receive all relevant information and materials
- Check that decisions taken by the Governing Body are enacted
- Ensure that Governors know and follow the rules and code of conduct that keep Governing Bodies democratic
- Listen and be a critical friend to the Headteacher; meet regularly (e.g. monthly) to stay abreast of developments in school
- Ensure critical decisions of the Governing Body are communicated to parents, staff and others as appropriate
- Co-ordinate the Governing Body role in OFSTED and LA inspection
- Monitor the work of the Governing Body
- Represent the school publicly
- Investigate and respond to formal complaints

#### ***Job Description***

#### **Vice-Chair of Governors, Westfield Nursery School**

Responsible for: School Governors

- Support the chair in the conduct of meetings and other business of the Governing Body (as outlined above)
- Stand in for the chair when necessary
- Listen and be a critical friend to the chair

### 11. Job Description – Clerk to Governors

The Clerk to Governors is appointed by and accountable to the governing body, working with the chair, Headteacher and other governors to achieve continuity of governing body business. This job description highlights the main duties of the post.

#### ***Job Description***

#### **Clerk to Governors, Westfield Nursery School**

Responsible to: Governing Body

- Convene and minute full Governing Body meetings and Sub-Committee meetings, reflecting discussion between governors and the actions agreed
- Prepare and send out papers for all Governing Body meetings
- Maintain a record of governors' attendance at Governing Body meetings



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- Advise governors on where to obtain governance advice and information so as to keep up to date

### 12. Protocol for Visiting School

Schools are busy workplaces, and nobody should expect to just turn up, be shown around or wander around on one's own – however informal your relationship with the staff. Governors have no automatic right to visit the school. They only do so on invitation or by governing body decision (for example, within the terms of a visiting policy). The visit must fit in with the needs of the school and its pupils. The primary purpose of a governor visiting a school must be to explore the impact and effectiveness of the school's policies and procedures. This is to enable you as governor to do your job better. Please see Governor Visit Pack.

### 13. Responding to Parents: Notes for governors

As a parent governor please remember:

- Parents are the first teachers of their children
- Children's first loyalty is always to their parents
- It is very difficult for a school to make a difference to a child's life chances without the support of the parents
- When parents have different expectations of their children from the school, they are not necessarily 'wrong'
- Parents' principal relationship with a school is through their own child – their interest in how the school organises itself will always be secondary to that
- Schools and parents need to work together for the good of the child – schools know a lot about teaching and learning, but parents are the experts in their own children

If you are approached by parents about an issue in school:

- Always refer them first to their child's class leader if it is regarding the pupil's progress or a particular incident. If, after discussing with the teacher, they are not satisfied, they should then discuss the issue with the Headteacher, the final recourse being to submit a formal written complaint to the Chair of governors, though this should be a last resort
- If the parent has a 'whole school' issue, refer them to the Headteacher – she is responsible for all organisational matters and for personnel
- If they are reluctant to speak to their child's class leader or the Headteacher, offer encouragement and support. You can say with confidence that our Headteacher believes in the need to work in partnership with all members of the school community, including parents. *Remember there will always be another side to the story*
- Whether or not you believe the complaint or problem is not important, all issues need to be addressed – the parent is almost certainly expressing his or her concern in the only way they know how (although the real problem is sometimes hidden under other stuff)
- When people shout, it's probably because they don't think anyone is listening (and sometimes they're right.) But do not accept aggressive behaviour – always explain the complaints procedure and encourage them to make their views known through the appropriate channel, as outlined above



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The schools Complaint's policy outlines procedures to follow when a complaint is made.

### 14. Governors' Rights

To help you discharge the responsibilities and duties of school Governors, you have certain rights:

1. **Time:** You have a right to see that your valuable time is being deployed well – that the Governing Body works efficiently and effectively; that you are supported in discharging your duties; that meetings are efficiently conducted. You have some rights to (unpaid) time off work.
2. **Information:** You have a right to certain documents and other information and should never hesitate to ask the Headteacher or chair for any information you require.
3. **Resources:** There should be access to support for any jobs you are expected to do – paper, computer, correspondence, policies and so on.
4. **Visiting:** You need to know what the school's practice is – a visiting policy and code of practice
5. **Training:** The Governing Body is encouraged to use the county training programmes.
6. **A Job Description:** You are entitled to know what is expected of you.
7. **Self-evaluation:** You need, both individually and collectively, to know if you as a Governing Body are doing a good job.

### 15. Judgments on Governance: School Inspection (England)

Please see the attached link to the Early Years inspection framework

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/828465/Early\\_years\\_inspection\\_handbook.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/828465/Early_years_inspection_handbook.pdf)

Please see the attached link to the school's inspection framework

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/843108/School\\_inspection\\_handbook\\_-\\_section\\_5.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/843108/School_inspection_handbook_-_section_5.pdf)

### 16. Finance in School

Governors oversee the financial health of the school. More information can be found on the Central Bedfordshire Portal, please see the attached link. This includes information on the financial regulations for schools and the scheme of finance for schools.

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/schools-portal/finance/landing.aspx>

### 17. Covid-19

The governors are instrumental in a 'School Plan' for safe opening outline control measures, as well as ensuring a Covid-19 risk assessment is carried out and regularly reviewed.

Under the pandemic government guidelines governors are updated regularly by email. All governor's meetings are held virtually via Microsoft Teams.

The governors continue with their roles and duties.

Updated- November 2020

To be reviewed- November 2021