

Grindon Hall Christian School

School Improvement Board Terms of Reference

Constitution and Authority

The constitution of the School Improvement Board (SIB) is determined by Emmanuel Schools Foundation (Foundation). The SIB will act as committee of the Foundation. SIB members, although not themselves Trustees of the charities, act at local level on behalf of the Foundation with delegated responsibilities. The SIB will be accountable to the Foundation but will also report to the LGB if the LGB continues to operate.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of the SIB is to provide support and challenge to the school on behalf of the Foundation. It will achieve this through providing strategic direction at a local level, promoting high standards and educational achievement.

The SIB will take on the role of governance of the school from the LGB. The school, through the SIB, will remain accountable to the Foundation. Once the school is making progress, the SIB can set up a shadow LGB to take on non-educational statutory responsibilities and the SIB will support and advise on the training of the shadow LGB members. At this point the SIB will take a close focus on and responsibility for educational performance and higher level HR issues within the school, leaving the shadow LGB to oversee the day-to-day running of the school.

A shadow LGB may or may not consist of members from the previous LGB – the SIB can choose to retain members from the former LGB if they are deemed to have the skills required of good school governors. Once the school has been removed from a category and when the SIB is confident the shadow LGB is sufficiently skilled to enact the full range of duties required of school governors the SIB will be disbanded and governance of the school handed over entirely to the shadow LGB. At this point the shadow LGB will become the full governing body for the school, and will be accountable to the Foundation for the performance of the school.

Membership

The SIB will have between 6 - 8 members.

Membership of the SIB to include individuals whose skills, experience and commitment contribute to the effectiveness of the SIB. The SIB will have an independent chair. The Chair of the SIB will hold to account the Leadership Team and any SIB sub committees.

- The Principal/Head Teacher is not a member of the SIB but would normally be in attendance at SIB meetings.
- SIB members will serve for as long as the school in question remains in an Ofsted category. At the point where the school has improved sufficiently to be removed from a category the SIB members will take a view on when is the appropriate time to create a shadow LGB, develop its capacity and then hand over responsibility. At this point the SIB will be disbanded and the LGB members will be accountable for the performance of the school. The terms of reference for LGB members will then apply to the new body.
- The SIB may elect a vice chair.

- The Executive Principal (GHCS) is not a member of the SIB but will attend SIB meetings as required, and will represent the Foundation during Ofsted monitoring visits and inspections.
- Documents outlining the processes and procedures for both the appointment and dismissal of LGB Chairs and members can be requested from the Foundation and is contained in the Foundation Scheme of Delegation.

The Role of Committees in SIBs

The role of committees for SIBs is identical to the role of committees for the Foundation LGBs.

Appointment of the Chair of the SIB

The appointment of the Chair of the SIB is led by the Foundation with support from the school. The Chair will be appointed by interview to ensure that the individual appointed has the skills and experience necessary to drive up educational standards in the school at pace.

Recruitment strategies should be agreed with the Executive Principal (GHCS) and CEO, and would normally include some form of advertisement to ensure that the process is as transparent as possible. Personal recommendations and references are important to the process, and a DBS check must be carried out. It is the responsibility of the Company Secretary to ensure that a DBS check is completed for the Chair.

The recommendation to appoint is made by the CEO to the Chair of the Foundation, who, once he/she has approved, will report to the GHCS nominated trustee.

During the recruitment process the SIB members (if already appointed), and CEO, should consider the key skills and attributes required by a prospective Chair. The recruitment panel should use these skills-based criteria to appoint an individual who can effectively discharge the responsibilities associated with the role.

Appointment of SIB members

The Foundation has the power to appoint and dismiss members of the SIB. The CEO, Executive Principal (GHCS) and the Chair of the Foundation will guide the appointment process to ensure an appropriate balance of skills and effectiveness to ensure stability of governance.

The process for recruitment and appointment must be transparent and inclusive. There should be good opportunities to meet prospective candidates before an appointment is made. Personal recommendations and references are important to the process, and a DBS check must be carried out. It is the responsibility of the Company Secretary to ensure that DBS checks are completed for all LGB members.

During the recruitment process consideration should be given to the key skills and attributes required to effectively contribute to the operation of the governing body. Based on a review of the position of the school, those responsible for appointing SIB members should also consider what is most urgently needed to accelerate school improvement. The recruitment panel should then use these skills-based criteria to appoint individuals who can effectively discharge the responsibilities of a SIB member, and who possess specific skills which will be of value to the school.

Expectations of SIB members

Key characteristics

SIB members should, at all times, ensure that they maintain the following standards as a minimum:

Engagement - take an active role in their duties as a Governor including attendance at school activities, visiting the school, membership on committees and sub-committees.

Confidentiality - accept and maintain the highest levels of confidentiality at all times, understanding that an LGB cannot be effective if there is a question about confidentiality.

Contribution - bring to the SIB skills, experience and community knowledge and make use of them to enrich the work of the SIB and the school.

Reporting - provide brief written reports as required, providing the reports in good time to give the person responsible for the administration of the meeting adequate time to collate and distribute all reports.

Attendance

The SIB members are expected to attend all SIB meetings and the meetings of any SIB committees of which they are a named member. Members who miss more than two consecutive meetings may be asked to reconsider their membership of the SIB. The SIB chair must be present at all meetings. Only in extraordinary circumstances would the SIB chair not be in attendance. In such a situation the Chair would inform the other members of the SIB, giving at least three days' notice, and delegate authority for chairing the meeting to the Vice-Chair of the SIB in their absence.

The SIB may make such arrangements as they see fit for the discharge of their functions by any other person. Other individuals and observers may only attend with agreement of the SIB.

The SIB in operation

Frequency and Preparation

The SIB must meet at least once per half term to ensure the pace of improvement is maintained and monitored frequently. Agendas and papers should be circulated at least seven days in advance of the meeting. The SIB should ensure that the agendas include reports from any sub-committees and a rolling programme of policy review. Safeguarding and Health & Safety should be a standing item on all agendas. The SIB will also focus on standards in education throughout the school as a key component of each meeting.

Responsibilities

The SIB works in partnership with the Principal/Head Teacher, the Senior Leadership Team, and executive team from the Foundation to:

- Agree and monitor the implementation of any post-Ofsted action plan.
- Uphold the values of the school and the ethos and core values of the Foundation.
- Hold the Principal/Head Teacher and SLT to account, and be accountable to any interested party for the schools performance.
- Set the school's strategic plan.
- Determine appropriate standards and targets to be met by the school.
- Agree strategies to achieve continuous improvement, raising standards for all students.
- Monitor and review the following: the achievement of all groups of students, the quality of teaching and the curriculum, the behaviour, attendance, punctuality and safety of students, leadership and management and finances.
- Ensure budgets are allocated effectively reflecting the priorities as set out in the school's strategic and school's improvement plans.

Specific Duties

- Monitors strategies for continuous improvement and implementation of short-, medium- and long-term school improvement plans developed by the Principal/Head Teacher and senior leadership team.
- Ensures that the vision and values of both the Foundation and the school are upheld in school improvement plans.
- Review the support provided by the sponsor to implement the action plan and build capacity for improvement.
- Responds to school inspections; Governors should make themselves available to meet with inspectors.
- Promotes the school within the local community and the involvement of parents in the life of the school.
- Monitors community and parental involvement in the life of the school and the impact the school has on the local community.
- Takes a strategic overview of staffing structures and professional development of staff, based on a sound knowledge of the quality and effectiveness of the teaching staff.
- Ensures the school has robust procurement and financial systems, and that best value is achieved.
- Has an overview of the curriculum and the extra-curricular provision, ensuring it meets the needs of and adequately provides for all students.
- Has designated members to oversee safeguarding, health and safety and special educational needs
- Reviews local school policies, procedures and processes
- Provides support to the Principal/Head Teacher and the school during disciplinary, capability and grievance procedures for staff, or during exclusion procedures for student. This may involve sitting on the panels during initial hearings and appeals where necessary.
- At the appropriate time, creates and delegates some responsibility to a shadow LGB.
- Supports the development of the shadow LGB to ensure it has the skills and experience necessary to enact the duties and responsibilities of all matters pertaining to the governance of the school once the SIB is disbanded.

Decision Making

When a difficult issue arises the Chair should canvas information from the membership and encourage respectful debate. If it is decided that a formal decision needs to be taken the Chair should then summarise the position and the views of those present. The required decision should then be proposed and seconded by members of the SIB and a decision taken. Where not all members are in agreement a decision will be made by a quorum.

Quorum

No meeting shall be transacted unless a quorum is present. Three SIB members shall constitute a quorum.

Reporting

The minutes of all SIB meetings and sub-committees must be formally recorded and submitted to the GHCS nominated trustee as soon as is reasonable following the meeting. The purpose for this reporting requirement is to ensure that the communication between the SIB and the Foundation is timely and that any issues are drawn to the attention of the Foundation. Where appropriate, or as directed by the Chair of the Foundation, CEO or Executive Principal (GHCS), an education director, education advisors or educational partners may attend SIB meetings and would report back to the GHCS nominated trustee.

The minutes of all SIB meetings and sub-committees may be requested by the Ofsted. The minutes form part of the evidence that inspection teams will use to judge the quality and cohesion of governance at local level and through to the Foundation.

Review

The SIB is responsible for reviewing its own membership and activities at least on an annual basis.

Insurance

The Foundation indemnifies the SIB, the Chair of Governors and Governors themselves against any claim (including reasonable legal costs) that may arise in carrying out the duties of the SIB unless the SIB or any of its members have acted unlawfully or negligently. The Foundation maintains public liability insurance up to a value of £5,000,000 which covers all Governors.

The Inspection Process

For inspection purposes the legal position is that the Foundation Chair is the Proprietor/Chair of Governors for the school. The inspectors consider the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the school, the quality of leadership and management at all levels, the manner in which complaints are handled, the welfare, health and safety of the students, suitability of all staff, the standard of the premises, and the effectiveness with which Governors carry out their responsibilities.

During an inspection, SIB members should ensure that they are available at any time to meet with inspectors. Ofsted inspectors would typically want to meet with the Chair of the SIB and the chair of a sub-committee so, although all SIB members should be aware of inspections and be available for meetings. SIB members can expect to be asked about the school, the quality of education and care, and the schools leadership. SIBs should also be able to demonstrate the methods used to seek the views of parents and how those views have influenced their decision making. The inspectors will evaluate the effectiveness of the SIB, and how well they support and challenge the school.