

EASTCOURT INDEPEPNDENT SCHOOL
TERMS OF REFERENCE
FOR THE PROPRIETOR'S ADVISORY BOARD

The Advisory Board is appointed by the Proprietor. It does not have any executive authority or power to commit the Proprietor to a particular line of action. It is not a decision-making body; it is there to give its best advice to the Proprietor and this advice may be accepted or rejected in whole or in part.

Implicit in this is the Advisory Board's unreserved support for the educational aims, objectives and ethos of Eastcourt Independent School as declared by the Proprietor.

Membership:

Membership of the committee is open to members of the Advisory Board who wish to participate. The Proprietor/Principal (Mrs Christine Redgrave), Deputy Headteacher and EYFS teacher (Miss Emma Redgrave), Educational Consultants (Mr Bill Brown and Mr Martin Ayres) and Accountant (Mr Nicolas Godsave).

Composition of the Advisory Board:

- The composition of an Advisory Board needs careful thought and planning. Ideally the members should between them be able to speak with knowledge and experience on the whole range of matters which are likely to come before them. Accordingly, when a vacancy is to be filled, the Proprietor should consider what field of experience or training is not represented, or is under-represented, on the Board.
- The best size for an Advisory Board is 6 to 8 members.
- Continuity is important, and members should normally be expected to serve for at least 5 years. At the same time, the regular infusion of fresh blood is equally important, and it is desirable to strike a balance in the age range of members. Some schools have found it valuable to limit tenure to 9 or 15 years, with perhaps the possibility of reappointment after a break. While a good member may be lost in this way, the greater danger of members outstaying their usefulness is avoided without embarrassment.

The Individual Member of the Advisory Board:

- The strength of the Advisory Board lies in the talents of its members and in their ability to work together as a team. Each member has an equal right to participate, and to make up his or her own mind about the issues presented. But once decisions are taken, individual members are bound by them and should be loyal to them.
- Where a member is a parent of a pupil in the School, he or she clearly acts in the interests of the School and not personally.
- Breaches of confidentiality, however inadvertent, can cause embarrassment or damage to the School. In general the business, discussions and minutes of the Advisory Board meetings should be viewed as confidential to the Proprietor, including what is discussed before a recommendation is made. But once taken the decision may, at the discretion of the Proprietor, be open, as may the agreed reasons for arriving at it. It is for the Proprietor to determine how best to meet the openness requirement and for individual members to adhere to it.
- Many members will bring to the School not only their professional or technical expertise but also some experience of comparable roles.

The Chairman of the Advisory Board:

- The Chairman is appointed by the Proprietor, and so, except where he or she is appointed *ex officio*, it is a prime responsibility of the Proprietor to find the right person for it. In addition to seeing that the business of

the Advisory Board is conducted properly and the meetings are run efficiently, it is the Chairman's task to get all members to work together as a team.

- The office requires that time be given to its discharge and, if special difficulties arise, a great deal of time. The Chairman will make it his or her business to be fully informed about the affairs of the school and to have a clear grasp of its financial position. His or her information should, so far as is possible, be at first hand and would normally come mainly from talks with the Proprietor.

Meetings:

- The Advisory Board should meet at least once a term. Although meetings elsewhere are sometimes convenient the ideal venue is the School, where members can, if appropriate, see something of the School's activities.
- The agenda will of course vary from meeting to meeting, but there will be some common features. The Proprietor's report should be a regular item. If members have delegated some of their work to committees, the agenda will provide for reports concerning this. There could also be a slot for the report of an individual member charged with taking forward some Advisory Board initiative. Members should be fully informed of changes in the law that have implications for the School. From time to time the Proprietor will bring forward policies. The resulting agenda should balance educational and business items, and it is good practice to take the items in that order.
- The Proprietor's report should go out with the agenda papers, and time should be allowed for an unhurried discussion on it at the meeting. Members and Proprietor should ensure that it includes the best indicators of the school's performance and that, over a period of time, it enables members to discern the school's strengths and weaknesses. The report should contain an account of progress in meeting (where permitted by the Proprietor) the objectives of the school development plan, and any proposals for amendment of that plan. It may also contain other academic or pastoral issues that require review or decision by the members. Mention of staffing problems, with the permission of the Proprietor, (provided it is not so specific that it might prejudice a subsequent disciplinary hearing) and of serious breaches of school discipline will help to establish in the minds of members some of the Proprietor's current concerns.

Committees:

- It is increasingly common to find members with educational expertise meeting with the Proprietor. Its brief is to give advice and support to the Proprietor, though the presence of members will ensure that important curricular and staffing issues are given appropriate weight in the plenary sessions. The Proprietor may also have committees dealing with finance, oversight of the buildings health and safety. At their discretion the Proprietor may wish to invited specific members of the Advisory Board to join these Committees for the whole or part of their meetings.

The Clerk to the Members:

- The clerk organises the agendas for meetings of the Advisory Board, with the approval of the Chairman and the Proprietor. The clerk's duties include convening the meetings and seeing that the dates of subsequent meetings are agreed. Notes of the meeting may be taken by the clerk, or by an assistant, but it is for the clerk to draft the minutes for the approval of the Chairman, to distribute them to members and to ensure that the authorised version is filed along with reports presented at the meeting.

Members and the Proprietor:

- The Advisory Board is concerned with aims, policies and plans. It supports the Proprietor in formulating and implementing them. Acting within that framework, the Proprietor and her team manage and administer the school with the support of the Advisory Board.

- While this short statement of the respective roles of Proprietor and members is broadly true, in practice the relationship between the two can be a complex one. It is important that the Proprietor as an administrator should never feel critical scrutiny from any member of the Advisory Board at any time. Partnership is the key, and the four paragraphs that follow illustrate how that partnership may work in practice. They are not exhaustive.
- In supporting the Proprietor to deal with the exigencies of school life sensibly and consistently, the Proprietor and the Advisory Board will need policies. Some policies are required by law; but even when they are not there is value in published policy statements which can be varied with changing circumstances: they reduce the risk or argument and people know where they stand. From time to time, members should review the list of policies to make sure there are no gaps that could leave open the possibility of litigation.
- Where appropriate, development planning is another area where the Proprietor and should seek the view of the Advisory Board. The plan should cover, *inter alia*, education, and buildings. The Proprietor may involve individual members who have relevant skills in the formulation of the Development Plan which should include a statement of the school's aims and arrangements for monitoring targets and tasks.
- The relationship between an Advisory Board and its Proprietor should be one of complete trust, with unfettered frankness of discussion, and support for the Proprietor.

Going into School:

Individual members may only enter the school, in their role as members of the Advisory Board, with the Proprietor's permission. Members should arrange their visits with the Proprietor. The Advisory Board should plan visits to cover a wide range of school work and each visit should have a clear purpose. Visits by members can be useful and informative. They do not replace professional inspection or the monitoring and evaluation carried out by the Proprietor.

Monitoring and Review:

To be continuously monitored and reviewed by no later than two years from the date shown below.

Signed: *C. Redgrave*

Date: August 2020

Mrs C. Redgrave
Proprietor and Headteacher