

## So you want to be a School Governor?

### Why become a governor?

#### Because:

- you care about the education children receive
- you want to make an important contribution to your local community
- you enjoy a challenging and rewarding role
- you are keen to help all children do better at school
- you want to help strengthen the link between schools and their communities

### Who are the governors?

A governing body is made up of people from different groups, including parents, teachers and other staff, the local education authority and people from business backgrounds.

Schools with a religious community also have foundation governors. Special schools may have health authority or voluntary group governors.

## What qualifications do governors need?

There are no formal qualifications, either academic or otherwise, needed to become a school governor. The one essential requirement is an interest in, and commitment to, the education of children. Governors have to be over 18 years of age.

Governors are ordinary people, drawn from many areas of society. They need to be able to devote time to getting to know the school well and be available to support it.

A governor must be a good listener, and someone who is able to read and assimilate information easily. A governor must be able to:

- raise questions and to participate in discussion and decision-making
- be discreet, open minded and fair
- be a source of ideas and a good communicator
- be enthusiastic about the work of the school
- be prepared to participate in its life.

## What do governors do?

Governors play an important part in overseeing the running of the school in the interests of the community it serves.

Individual governors have no power or responsibility. It is only the full governing body which has legal duties and powers. All governors share in that corporate responsibility.

The day-to-day management of the school is the responsibility of the headteacher and staff. The philosophy for running the school is a shared responsibility worked out by common consent.

Governors govern rather than manage. They are there to give direction and focus by performing a vital strategic role.

Governors work with the headteacher making decisions about:

- Standards - ensuring a strategic and systematic approach to promoting high standards of educational achievement.
- Targets - setting appropriate targets for pupil achievement
- Curriculum - ensuring that the curriculum is balanced and broadly based, and that the National Curriculum and religious education are taught.
- Reporting results - reporting on assessments and examination results.
- Policies - deciding how, in broad strategic terms the school should be run.
- Finance - determining how to spend the budget allocated to the school.
- Staffing - deciding the number of staff, the pay policy and making decisions on staff pay.
- Appointments - appointing the head and deputy head teacher and other staff.
- Discipline - agreeing procedures for staff conduct and discipline.
- Pupil Discipline - agreeing procedures for pupil discipline.
- Inspection follow-up - drawing up an action plan after inspection.

**What would be expected of me?**

## **TIME**

**As a governor you need to make time to:**

- attend a meeting of the full governing body at least once a term
- attend committee and working party meetings (about once or twice a term) and school events
- read reports and background papers prior to meetings
- attend the annual meeting of parents
- attend other occasions such as concerts, open evenings, sports day etc.
- take part, if necessary, in staff appointment panels, pupil exclusion panels and more rarely staff discipline and grievance hearings

**As a governor you can demonstrate your commitment to the school by:**

- showing an interest and participating in many of the school's activities
- attending governors' meetings
- visiting when you can during the day
- getting to know the staff, pupils and their work
- offering support and expertise

## **KNOWLEDGE**

**As a governor it is helpful if you can:**

- keep up-to-date with local and national developments in education
- attend governor training sessions

## **SKILLS**

**As a governor you can be most effective when you:**

- work co-operatively and creatively with others
- use your personal qualities and expertise in the interest of the school, its pupils and staff.

## Who is eligible to be a governor?

Governors must be 18 or over at the date they are elected or appointed. There is no upper age limit. The following people cannot be governors.

### People who:

- can be compulsorily detained under the Mental Health Act 1983;
- are bankrupt or disqualified under the Company Directors Disqualification Act;
- have been removed from a charity trusteeship by the Charity Commissioners or High Court on the grounds of misconduct or mismanagement;
- are included in the list of teacher or workers prohibited or restricted from working with children or young persons (currently named in List 99);
- have declined to co-operate with a request for a criminal records check;
- have been disqualified from being an independent school proprietor, teacher or employee in any school by an Independent Schools Tribunal or the Secretary of State;
- have in the previous five years (or since becoming a governor) been sentenced to three months or more in prison (whether this was suspended or not) without the option of a fine;
- have in the previous 20 years been sentenced to imprisonment for five years or more;
- have been fined for causing a nuisance or disturbance on school premises during the five years prior to, or since, appointment or election as a governor;
- are governing body clerks, or clerks to staff dismissal, dismissal appeal, pupil discipline of admissions committee.

## **Term of office**

The usual term of office is four years. However, governors are volunteers who can leave at any time and can similarly be re-appointed or reelected.

Governors can be disqualified for failing to attend a main meeting of the governing body for six months from the date of the first meeting missed.

## **SOME THINGS NEW GOVERNORS HAVE SAID:**

"I have children at the school and want to express my interest and support."

"I want to give back something in return for my education."

"I had a happy time at school and want it to be so for this generation."

"I'm a local councillor and aware of how important it is to provide good schools."

"When I moved into the community I wanted to get to know people through service. Now I'm well established and accepted I'm glad to help the school and welcome the next newcomer!"

"I work in the education service and because of my interest in children and their learning I see this is an area in which I can further use my expertise."

"The Diocese/Parochial Church Council asked me to represent them as I believe our local aided school has an important place in the community."

"LEAs and county schools work closely in partnership so I'm glad to be an LEA nominee on my school governing body."

"I have some spare time and I'm glad to be useful."