

Schools need governors

Help our schools to support our children by becoming a school governor

Role of a school governor

To contribute to the work of the governing body in ensuring high standards of achievement for all children and young people in the school by:

- Setting the school's vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils; and
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

What do governors do?

As part of the governing body team, a governor is expected to:

1. Contribute to the strategic discussions at governing body meetings which determine:

- the vision and ethos of the school;
- clear and ambitious strategic priorities and targets for the school;
- that all children, including those with special educational needs, have access to a broad and balanced curriculum;
- the school's budget, including the expenditure of the pupil premium allocation;
- the school's staffing structure and key staffing policies;
- the principles to be used by school leaders to set other school policies.

2. Hold the senior leaders to account by monitoring the school's performance; this includes:

- agreeing the outcomes from the school's self-evaluation and ensuring they are used to inform the priorities in the school development plan;
- considering all relevant data on all aspects of school performance;
- asking challenging questions of school leaders;
- ensuring senior leaders have developed the required policies and procedures and the school is operating effectively according to those policies;
- acting as a link governor on a specific issue and reporting to the governing body on the progress on the relevant school priority;

3. When required, serve on panels of governors to:

- appoint the Headteacher and other senior leaders;
- appraise the Headteacher;
- set the head teacher's pay and agree the pay recommendations for other staff;
- hear the second stage of staff grievances and disciplinary matters;
- hear appeals about pupil exclusions.

The role of governor is largely a thinking and questioning role, not a doing role.

A governor does not

- Write school policies;
- Undertake audits of any sort – whether financial or health and safety - even if the governor has the relevant professional experience;
- Spend much time with the pupils of the school
- Fundraise – this is the role of the PTA
- Undertake classroom observations to make judgements on the quality of teaching
- Do the job of the school staff

As you become more experienced as a governor, there are other roles you could volunteer for which would increase your degree of involvement and level of responsibility (e.g. as a chair of a committee).

A governor is expected to

- get to know the school, including visiting the school occasionally during school hours, and gain a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses;
- attend induction training and regular relevant training and development events;
- attend meetings (full governing body meetings and committee meetings) and read all the papers before the meeting;
- act in the best interest of all the pupils of the school; and
- behave in a professional manner, as set down in the governing body's code of conduct, including acting in strict confidence.

What skills do governors need?

No formal qualifications are necessary but our schools are keen to attract people in the community who can bring energy, experience and fresh ideas. The ability to communicate in English is very important. Some people who would make very good governors may be put off because they think you need to be an expert. Not so - interest, enthusiasm and commitment are much more important.

Who is eligible?

Anyone over 18 can become a school governor, with a few exceptions. All applicants are subject to checks to ensure the safety and protection of the young people in our schools. You don't need to have a child at a school to become a school governor.

Being a governor can be very rewarding

Despite the fact that governors are volunteers they can get a great deal from the work and time they put in. It gives them a chance to:

- make a difference to how well schools are run
- see how their efforts help raise standards
- do something positive for the next generation
- serve the local community
- help realise their own potential by utilising existing skills and learning new skills

Schools are part of the community they serve – and can provide a focal point for improving life chances for adults too. Everyone has something to offer their local school; but governors find that they gain a lot too, from meeting new people to gaining new skills and most importantly the knowledge that you are helping to improve educational standards for children and young people in the area. Many employers encourage staff to become school governors. They realise that the skills gained from being a governor are transferable to the workplace.

How much of your time is needed?

Governing bodies meet at least once a term, usually after school or in the early evening. In addition governors need to attend committee meetings, school events and appropriate training. Governors are encouraged to visit school during the day to see it in action, and to get to know the staff and pupils. Governors usually serve for four years.

What support will you receive?

Support, training and guidance is available from your school and the LA's School Governor Service.

Types of Governors

- **Parent governors** – parents with a child at the school, elected by parents
- **Staff governors** – head (if s/he chooses) + members of the school elected by the school staff.
- **LA governors** - appointed by the Local Authority (LA)
- **Community governors** – people who live or work in the community served by the school and are appointed by the governing body.

Accountability

Governing bodies are accountable to:

- The Local Authority (which maintains the school)
- The parents
- The pupils
- The community served by the school
- The staff of the school