
Why become a School Governor?

Governor Support
Services

Reviewed April 2013

Frequently asked questions

Why become a governor?

You care about children's learning and well being.

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 make progress.

You want to help strengthen the link between schools and their communities.

Who are school governors?

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

Church schools also have foundations governors. Special schools may have health authority or voluntary group governors.

What qualifications do governor 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, children's learning and well-being. Governors have to be over 18 years of age.

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 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?

They give direction and focus by performing a vital strategic role. The day-to-day management of the school is the responsibility of the headteacher and staff. The values and vision for leading the school are shared between the governing body, headteacher and senior leadership team.

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.

Governors work with the headteacher making strategic 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 based on the National Curriculum.

Policies – deciding how, in broad strategic terms, the school should be run.

Finance – determining how best to use resources allocated to the school.

Staffing – deciding the staff structure, the pay policy and making decisions on staff pay.

Appointments – appointing the head and deputy headteacher and other staff.

Discipline – agreeing procedures for pupil discipline.

Self-evaluation – understanding how well the school is doing, identifying and monitoring areas for improvement.

Developing partnerships – ensuring the school works effectively with other partners.

Community links – keeping the school at the heart of its community.

How long is a Term of Office?

The governing body decides how long an individual category of governor' term of office will be up to a maximum of four year. However; governors are volunteers who can leave at any time and can similarly be re-appointed or re-elected.

Governors can be disqualified if they fail to attend a full governing body meeting for six months from the date of the first meeting missed and the absence recorded in the minutes as not approved.

What would be expected of me?

Time

As a governor you would need to make time to:

- attend a meeting of the full governing body, usually twice a term;
- attend committee and working party meetings (if this is how the governing has organised its work) about once or twice a term;
- attend school events;
- read reports and background papers prior to meetings;
- visit the school during the working day;

- attend occasions such as concerts, sports day etc.;
- take part, if necessary, in staff appointment panels, pupil exclusion panels, complaints panels and staff discipline and grievance hearings;
- attend training to develop the skills and knowledge you will need to carry out your role effectively.

Commitment

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

- showing an interest in participating in many of the school's activities;
- attend governors' meetings;
- 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 learning and development sessions, especially the programme for new governors.

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.

What kinds of help and support will be available?

A great deal of professional advice and support is available to help governors with their duties and responsibilities from:

- the chair of governors;
- the headteacher;
- West Sussex Governance Team – a handbook is available giving details of how to access the support provided and of the full training programme available;
- diocesan boards which support aided and controlled school governors;
- other governors;
- national and local websites.

How do I express and interest in becoming a governor?

In one or all of these ways:

- fill in the online form (see link on becoming a governor home page)
- contact the school in which you have an interest, its headteacher or chair of governors (see the school website for contact details)
- contact the Diocese about being a governor of a church school (see the governors contacts and link page for details)

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. Please see a summary below of the people who cannot be governors. Full details can be found in The School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2003 and 2012 Schedule 4.

People who:

- are subject to a bankruptcy restriction order 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 in the administration of the charity;
- are included in the list of teachers or workers prohibited or restricted from working with children or young persons (those on a list considered by the Secretary of State as unsuitable to work with children) or have declined to co-operate with a request to undertake a criminal records check;
- 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 or more years;
- 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.

There are more than 3000 governors in West Sussex.

Join them and help make a difference!