

Information for Prospective Governors

This gives an overview of a governor's responsibilities. If you are interested in becoming a school governor, please contact the school to request an application form. For more information about the role of governors, read on ...

What we hope you will get out of being a governor:

- the knowledge that you are helping schools and pupils.
- the satisfaction of giving something back to the community
- a sense of purpose and achievement
- new skills which may be useful elsewhere
- training and support in order to help you fulfil your duties and responsibilities

What we hope you will be able to offer:

- time (research shows that most governors give about 20 hours per term to meetings, reading documents, visiting the school and attending training)
- commitment
- a willingness to learn
- a listening ear
- the ability to assimilate information, make judgements and take decisions
- flexibility
- tact and confidentiality
- ability to work as part of a team

Despite the age of the following quotation, these qualities for governorship still apply:

"A general zeal for education breadth of view, business habits administrative ability and the power of working harmoniously with others tact, interest in schoolwork, a sympathy for the teachers and the scholars residence in reasonable proximity to the school."

Qualities needed for "School Manager" Royal Commission 1888

Responsibilities Governors are appointed to provide:

- strong links between the school and the community it serves
- a wide experience of the outside world
- an independent view
- a visible form of accountability for the headteacher and staff of the school
- a team focusing on long term development and improvement
- accountability to the community for the use of resources and the standards of teaching and learning in the school
- support for the headteacher and staff.

School governors are expected to:

- attend the regular and special meetings of the governing body - there must be at least one meeting each term
- work as a member of the governing body (not as an individual) in the best interests of the school
- show an interest in school activities
- become well-informed about education in general and about their school in particular
- become familiar with the rules of school governance
- attend necessary training courses.

In addition, individual governors will usually be involved in some of the following activities often through groups or committees which report back to the main body:

- staff appointments
- the financial management of the school
- pupil discipline
- the curriculum
- the training of governors
- liaising with parents and other stakeholders on behalf of the governing body
- community links

Governing bodies are the strategic planners of schools

In order to do this a governing body:

- employs others to carry out the work
- has an operational manager (the headteacher) who is responsible for the day to day management of the school
- agrees policies and practice which allows the headteacher the necessary tools to carry out his/her responsibilities
- agrees principles and targets for improvement
- acts as the critical friend of the school and headteacher
- receives and discusses reports on the resulting practice and conduct of the school
- reviews its own working practices
- should keep parents informed of the school's progress

Decisions of the governing body are made in formal meetings, either with the full governing body, or in committees if their terms of reference allow.

All governing bodies have committees which:

- carry out tasks specifically given to them by the governing body
- aid the work of the governing body
- report back to the governing body
- the number of committees depends on the governing body and its needs.

Principles of Working as a Governor and as a Governing Body

Governors, once appointed, are holders of public office, and should be prepared to work to the same principles as any paid public official. This is true both as an individual and as a whole governing body.

Selflessness

Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligations to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands this.

Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interest relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

(The Seven Principles of Public Life from the Second Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life - The Nolan Committee CM3270 - 1 May 1996)

And Finally.....

No one governor is expected to know it all.

All governors share the responsibility of making the governing body effective and efficient by setting the remit of the body and its committees, being well-informed and attending the meetings.