

Parent Governors

All governing boards in maintained schools have parent governors. Full details of the role and responsibilities of governors are described in the "Governance Handbook" published by the Department for Education, and available online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook>.

Anyone who has parental responsibility for a pupil on the school roll at the time of the election can stand for election, subject to certain restrictions, and can vote in the election. A parent who works at the school for 500 hours or more per year or a parent who is an elected member of the local authority is not eligible to stand for election but they are permitted to vote. If insufficient parents stand for election the governing board can appoint parents to the governing board. The term of office for a parent governor is 4 years. A governor can stand down at any time.

Why become a parent governor?

Parents who have a child at the school and who take an active interest in the education of **all children at the school** should consider becoming a parent governor. They should not take on this role to follow up a particular concern about the education of an individual child.

Parents may have a skill or area of expertise which can be useful to the governing board.

It is useful for prospective parent governors to talk to other parent governors to find out what they think about the role and what is really involved before deciding whether to put forward a nomination. Questions could be "What have you found challenging?", "What have you found rewarding?"

Prospective governors may also be invited to attend a governing body meeting as an observer, to meet the Chair, Headteacher and other governors.

What will parent governors have to do?

- Take an active interest in education
- Give time to find out about the school
- Give time to learn about the role by attending induction training
- Abide by the Code of Conduct and confidentiality. A copy of our Code of Conduct is available on request.
- Undergo pre-appointment checks and sign a Declaration of Eligibility form
- Complete a register of pecuniary interests, for publication on the school website
- Attend meetings throughout the year. At this school, our meetings are usually held at 7pm but the day can vary. We hold 6 full board meetings per year, and have 3 committees which meet every half term. Governors usually serve on at least 1 committee.

The Strategic Role

The role of a parent governor is the same as that of a governor from any other category. Some of the ways in which governors work together strategically include:

- Monitoring the school's performance and working to raise standards and promote pupil welfare
- Ensuring that the school is improving the achievement and attainment of all pupils
- Setting the school's priorities for improvement
- Making sure that special needs are properly catered for
- Appointing the headteacher
- Taking part in panel meetings, to make decisions on pupil exclusions, parental complaints and staff pay, discipline and grievance issues
- Monitoring the work-life balance of the staff and headteacher
- Setting the budget
- Helping to formulate policies
- Being accountable to parents by ensuring they have the information to which they are legally entitled
- Ensuring the school has sound self-evaluation processes in place.

Collective Responsibility

All governors have equal status. They act collectively to support the school strategically. They participate in and contribute in shared decisions. Once decisions have been made, even if a governor does not personally agree with these, they must act collectively to support these decisions in a united way.

Critical Friend

The governing board is often described as a “critical friend”. They should support the school but also be prepared to question why decisions have been made and request information about the school to help them in their monitoring role.

The Headteacher’s Operational Role

Parent governors and other categories of governor may become involved in other aspects of school life. They may visit the school to help in various capacities, for example to hear children read. What governors must not do is get involved in operational decisions. The headteacher is responsible for the day to day running of the school.

Sometimes it can be difficult to decide where the strategic role ends and the operational one begins. There is a wealth of information available to governors to help them understand their role, including free training provided locally.

Confidentiality

The role of governor requires diplomacy, adherence to a Code of Conduct, and particularly confidentiality. A parent governor may be involved in discussions of a confidential nature during the course of a governing body meeting and these discussions may concern a particular individual.

Sometimes, governing board decisions need to remain confidential in the shorter or longer term, until such a time as formal announcements are made.

Communicating with parents and representing parents

A parent governor has a duty to communicate concerns and feelings expressed by parents to other members of the governing board. However, a parent governor is not a delegate who attends meetings with instructions on how to vote on any particular issue. A parent governor is a representative parent and should vote on issues at meetings in the best interests of the school and according to his/her own conscience.