

School Governors Information Sheet

Parent Governors

What does the governing body do?

The governing body ...

- sets the strategic direction, objectives, targets and policies;
- reviews progress against the budget, plans and targets;
- approves the school budget;
- acts as a critical friend to the Headteacher by providing support and challenge;
- appoints the Headteacher.

The governing body has a **strategic role** as opposed to operational role. This helps the governing body focus on their key roles of setting strategic direction, ensuring accountability, and monitoring and evaluation to promote school improvement and raise standards and achievement.

Why are parents needed on the governing body?

The governing body is made up from governors who are representative of the school's community, especially the families who use it, but also the wider public who pay for it and whose quality of life is affected by it. To achieve the right balance on a governing body, there are different categories of governors representing different groups of the school's community (also known as 'stakeholders') and each category is either appointed or elected onto the governing body. Parent governors are needed on all schools governing bodies, as parents play a major part in the schools community.

Depending on the type of school (community, foundation, or voluntary aided) the other categories of governor are ...

- Staff governors (elected by school staff)
- LA governors (appointed by Local Authority in Hillingdon)
- Community governors (appointed by the governing body from the local community)
- Partnership governors (nominated by parents and local community)
- Foundation governors (appointed by foundation or church)
- Sponsor governors (appointed by any school sponsors)

And the role of a parent governor ...?

The role of a parent governor is no different to that of the other governors, they have the same equal status and role to fulfil. The governors from each 'stakeholder' category are representative of the stakeholder groups, not representatives of the stakeholder groups. They cannot be mandated by any group to take any particular course of action or decision. The first loyalty of all governors should be to their school, and the community it serves.

You are representative of parents and therefore have a responsibility to communicate parents' views to the governing body, as far as you are able, and to keep parents informed as far as is possible. However you are not a delegate obliged to get voting instructions on every item on the agenda and to vote in accordance with the views of some or all of the parent body.

Parent governors can help to ensure that the governing body keeps a clear focus on ensuring that the school provides an effective, safe and stimulating learning environment for all children.

If an issue comes to a vote, you must vote for what you personally believe to be in the best interests of the school. Objectivity is essential. You are not there to promote the interests of your own children, but of all children.

What does being a governor actually involve?

Time

Each school has its own needs and the amount of time that governors spend on their governing body will vary. Prospective governors should consider that they must be able to take time to attend meetings and read necessary papers beforehand. As a governor you can expect to spend between three and five hours per month on governance overall, although this will vary.

Training

Training and development opportunities are offered by the local authority (LA) to support school governors in their role. Governors are highly recommended to attend 'Introduction to Governance' courses which are offered each term.

Visiting School

Governors will need to see the school in action and therefore scheduled visits are made with the school. Governors do not make unannounced visits.

Am I eligible to stand as a parent governor?

The following have Parental Responsibility and are eligible to stand or vote in the election as parent governors:-

- Both the **Mother and Father** if married to each other at the time of the child's birth or if they marry each other subsequently. This also includes those who have since separated or divorced.
- The **Mother** only, of a child whose parents were not married to each other at the time of the child's birth and no steps have been taken by the Father to acquire Parental Responsibility.
- The **Father**, if he was not married to the Mother at the time of the child's birth, but has subsequently obtained Parental Responsibility either by:-
 - A Parental Responsibility Agreement with the child's Mother (which needs to be in writing in a legally prescribed way) or,
 - As a result of an Order of the Court or,
 - By later re-marrying the Mother.
- With effect from the 1 December 2003 the **Father** acquires Parental Responsibility if together with the Mother he registers the birth of the child.
- The **Father** can also acquire Parental Responsibility by applying to the Court for a Parental Responsibility Order, if the Mother refuses to make a Parental Responsibility Agreement.

- A **Step Parent** who is married to the child's parent who has Parental Responsibility may acquire Parental Responsibility if the parent, or if the other parent of the child also has Parental Responsibility for the child, both parents may by agreement with the step-parent provide for the step-parent to have Parental Responsibility.
- A **Step Parent** may also acquire Parental Responsibility by an Order of the Court.
- A person who is not a parent or guardian of a child, but in whose favour a Residence Order is made by a Court.
- A person who receives a child by virtue of an Emergency Protection Order, so long as the Order lasts.

Parents who are employed at the school and work 500 hours or more in a school year are not eligible to stand for parent governorship as they qualify to stand as staff governors. However, they may still cast a vote. Parents who are elected members of the local authority are not eligible to stand as parent governors.

There are some other criteria that exclude anybody from qualifying as a governor. These are outlined in the nomination form in this pack.

Do I need any particular qualifications or skills?

No special qualifications are required, although enthusiasm, commitment and an interest in education are helpful qualities to bring to a governor post. It also helps to be a good listener, taking time to understand the views of different people.

I would like to stand for election, what do I do next?

To stand as a candidate in the election, you will need to complete the nomination form included in this pack, and return it to the school before the deadline specified in the letter from the Headteacher.

Part of the form (page 3 only) will be used as your objectives to voting parents as to why you wish to be elected. This will be sent out with the ballot papers.

Where can I get further information about school governors?

There are a number of sources of information if you want to find out more about becoming a school governor.

- Contact London Borough of Hillingdon Governor Support Service on 01895 277349.
- Contact the Headteacher, Chair of Governors or Clerk to Governors for more information about the role and the school.
- Visit the following websites:
 - www.hillingdongrid.org
 - www.governornet.co.uk
 - www.dfes.gov.uk
 - www.teachernet.gov.uk
 - www.parentcentre.gov.uk