

Guide for Prospective Governors

School governors are people who want to make a positive contribution to children's education.

Governors are one of the largest volunteer forces in the country and have an important part to play in raising school standards. The role of the governing body is key to the effectiveness of a school. Repeatedly, Ofsted has noted that the most effective schools demonstrate effective leadership and management - including by the governing body.

What do governors do?

School governors provide strategic leadership and accountability in schools. The governing body supports the head and staff by positively promoting the work of the school, celebrating its achievements, and working to ensure the best outcomes for the pupils. Governors appoint the Head Teacher and are involved in the appointment of other staff. Governors hold the main responsibility for finance in schools, and ask questions to check the performance of the school. Working with the Head Teacher, governors make the tough decisions about balancing resources.

Each individual governor is a member of a governing body, which is established in law as a corporate body. Individual governors may not act independently of the rest of the governing body. Decisions are the joint responsibility of the governing body. So long as they act within the law governors are protected from any financial liability for the decisions they take.

What is the role of the governing body?

The role of the governing body is a strategic one, its key functions are to:

- set the aims and objectives for the school
- set the policies for achieving those aims and objectives
- set the targets for achieving those aims and objectives
- monitor and evaluate the progress the school is making towards achievement of its aims and objectives
- be a source of challenge and support to the Head Teacher. The Head Teacher is responsible for the internal organisation, management and control of the school and the implementation of the strategic framework established by the governing body.

Who can become a governor?

Almost anyone over 18 years of age can become a governor. There are no particular qualifications or requirements, other than a willingness to give time to the role and a capacity for working with other people.

What will I get out of being a school governor?

- The knowledge that you have played a part in improving children's education and supported the school's staff.
- A chance to develop new skills and to practice existing ones, such as chairing meetings, speaking in groups, asking questions, making suggestions and appointing staff.
- A chance to help other members of the team, perhaps because they are new, are not used to committee work or need help in learning about the school and about school governance.

What makes a good school governor?

- You care about improving children's educational attainment.
- You want to contribute to the local community.
- You can work corporately and value the contributions of other people who may hold alternative views to your own. You also understand the concept of corporate decision-making.
- You are willing to undertake training to enhance your skills and knowledge
- You are willing to ask questions.
- You are open to ideas and willing to learn.

What can you offer?

- Enthusiasm.
- Commitment.
- As a member of the school's community, your local knowledge will be valuable.
- Individual schools will find business or other professional skills particularly helpful.

Different Categories of Schools and Governors:

There are different types of school with different categories of governor.

The types of state schools in England are:

- community
- voluntary controlled
- voluntary aided
- foundation
- trust – a type of foundation school
- academies, Free Schools & City Technology Colleges (CTCs) – independent state funded schools

There are also different categories of governor:

- Parent
- Staff
- Foundation
- Local Authority
- Co-opted

The type of governor you will become depends on your situation; however all governors have the same roles and responsibilities once part of the governing body.

- Associate member

Associate members are not governors and do not have a vote at full governing body meetings. However, they are entitled to attend those meetings and to be sent the papers for them. People who want to contribute specifically on issues related to their area of expertise (for instance, finance) can be appointed as associate members.

Recruitment of governors

If you think you have what it takes to be a school governor, we'd love to hear from you. Please send us a completed application form, or alternatively, contact the school directly to ask if they need a new governor.

Local Authority Governor

For information about the procedure for the appointment of LA Governors, please contact the Governor Support Team at governors.support@bury.gov.uk

Local Authority Governors for Academies

Academies have the option either to have one LA Governor or to not have one at all.

Parent Governors

All parents of registered pupils of a school are eligible to stand for the position of parent governor. However, if they are an Elected Member of Bury County Council or in paid employment at the school for more than 500 hours a year at the time of the election, they are not eligible to become a school governor.

Please note: Whilst schools must make every reasonable effort to fill parent governor vacancies through elections, if insufficient parents stand for election a governing body can consider filling the vacancy with one of the following options:

- a parent of a former pupil at the school,
- a parent of a child under compulsory school age.

Parent governors do not have to stand down if their child leaves the school during the period they serve, though they may do so if they wish. They may stand for re-election at the end of their term of office if they still have a child on the school roll. If there are more candidates than vacant places, an election will take place by secret ballot. If there is the same number of candidates as vacancies, then candidates are elected unopposed. If not enough parents stand for election, parent governors may be appointed by the governing body.