

Information for Prospective Governors

This page gives an overview of a governor's responsibilities. If you are interested in becoming a school governor there is an electronic application form at the end of this page. If you are applying for a staff or parent governor vacancy at a particular school you will need to download and complete the word or PDF version and submit it to the school, rather than use the on-line version. For more information about how governors are appointed, 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
- broader horizons
- new friends and workmates
- 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
- 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 ensure that the school profile is updated annually to 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.

All governors, once appointed, share the responsibilities and work as a team

- Individuals are part of the corporate governing body
- Duties are carried out as part of the team
- Governors are not legally liable as individuals.

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)

Hampshire County Council and Its Schools

Hampshire is one of the largest local education authorities in the country, dividing its administration between three local offices in Fleet, Havant and Bartley and its headquarters in Winchester.

There are over 500 schools in the county ranging from small rural primary schools of 60 children, to secondary schools with over 1500 students.

Some schools are totally funded by the local education authority and some have strong links, both spiritually and financially, with a church

Many children with learning difficulties attend mainstream schools, and there are schools catering exclusively for children with more complex learning difficulties

All schools have a governing body whose job it is to work with the headteacher, the local education authority and the Diocese for church schools, to ensure that the pupils receive the best possible education at that establishment.

Governing bodies vary in size from 10 - 21, but they all have the same requirement - to work together with the headteacher in agreeing the aims and conduct of the school, ensuring that the pupils have a full entitlement to the agreed curriculum and managing the school within its allocated budget.

There are regulations within which the governing body must work. These are laid down by central government (Education Acts and Regulations) and the local authority (Instruments of Government and Schemes of Financial Management).

Supporting Our Governors

All schools receive support from the Local Authority and have a School Improvement Partner who takes a particular interest in the conduct and achievement of the school. They are regular visitors to the school and may also attend governing body meetings when specific information is required. The Attached Inspector provides written reports to the school which, together with the headteacher's termly report and the annual tests, assessments and examinations, assist the governing body in knowing how the school is performing against specific targets and helps the governing body to set further targets for improvement.

Advice and support for schools and governing bodies is also available to cover financial, personnel, pupils' welfare and specific needs. Hampshire Governor Services has recently been awarded its fourth Charter Mark for the quality of its extensive training and support of governors in the county. Training is centred on the strategic role of governors and is free to governors themselves (schools have a budget to purchase the necessary governor training).

Courses offered include:

Induction for new governors	Monitoring and evaluation
Effective meetings	Using performance data to set targets
Strategic planning	Health and safety
Understanding school finance	Policy making
Selecting and appointing Staff	Understanding the school curriculum
Understanding personnel practice	Meeting childrens' special educational needs
Judging value for money	Committees and delegation

There is a Governor Services department in each local area as well as at the county headquarters. The Local Governor Services Coordinator and his/her team are happy to answer queries from individual governors and governing bodies, and provide support for governors and governing bodies at all times.

Making an application for governorship

Vacancies for elected governors are dealt with by the school when a vacancy occurs. (Elected governors are parent governors and staff governors).

For community and authority governorships the county council welcomes applications from all sections of the community. Following receipt of an application form prospective governors are invited to discuss their applications. This may be with the Local Governor Services Co-ordinators, existing governors and headteachers and/or elected members of the county council. The names of suitable people are held in a 'pool' by Hampshire Governor Services until suitable vacancies occur.

Governing bodies themselves, and County Councillors may apply to the pool to fill vacancies. Foundation schools usually have a 'pool' of their own for partnership and sponsor governors. The relevant Diocese oversee the arrangements for the appointment of foundation governors in church schools.

When suitable vacancies (community and local education authority governorships) arise in schools across the county people from the pool are contacted and asked if they wish to be considered. This does not stop individuals contacting their local schools if they are eligible to stand for election in any other category.

What you should do next

If you are interested in becoming a community or authority governor, please complete the [electronic application form](#). Alternatively, if you would like an application pack posted to you please contact your [local area office](#).

Please note: The [Disqualification Criteria](#) should be read **prior** to submitting your application.

It is useful to give some detail in the reasons why you are applying for governorship as this helps in the appointment process.

Any information you can give about your interests, skills and expertise, will be extremely useful. This should not be restricted to paid employment, and should include voluntary work, hobbies and any clubs and societies to which you belong or have belonged.

If you have a specific school in mind, please feel free to give the name of the school. It is usually easier to 'place' a governor if candidates are prepared to consider a type of school (e.g. primary, special, secondary) or an area (e.g. within 8 mile radius of Basingstoke) rather than one specific school.

Hampshire Governor Services keep in contact with all those people in the 'pool' to ensure that they still wish to be considered as governors, but it should be understood that acceptance to the pool does not automatically mean that individuals will be appointed as governors. Not all schools have vacancies at the same time, and it is not always possible to place a person if only one choice of school is given.

And Finally.....

No one governor is expected to know it all.

The strength of a governing body lies in its ability to attract and rely upon members from a wide variety of backgrounds, share out the duties amongst its members, and be able to take decisions as a group.

No one governor is responsible for the governing body, not even the chairman.

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.

"The role of the school governor is to

- support the school, but not uncritically

- explain its policies to parents and the community, but not blindly

- watch its standards, but with care, humility and an open mind

- help settle its disputes fairly and conscientiously

- oversee its policies and its use of the resources, but not in tiresome detail.

But you should do these things as a governing body, not as an individual governor, and in all such matters you should act with knowledge and understanding of the school."

(From **A Working Partnership** by Joan Sallis, governor and regular contributor to the Times Educational Supplement)