

Role of a School Governor

Who are governors?

Each school has a governing body which comprises members of the local community, parents, teachers, staff and representatives of the Local Education Authority.

What is the role of a school governor?

Governors work as part of a team. They are responsible for making sure the school provides a good quality education. Governors govern rather than manage. They are there to give direction and focus by providing the strategic role. The day to day management of the school is the responsibility of the Head Teacher. Governors will support and, at the same time, challenge Head Teachers by gathering views, asking questions and deciding what is best for the school.

The governing body is answerable to the parents and to the wider community. Governors are required to play an active part in the decision-making process of the school, getting involved in real issues. Governors make important decisions together on policies and strategies and have to stand by their decisions.

Some of the things governors can expect to be involved in include:

- Governing Body Meetings
- Committee Meetings
- Hearings and Appeals
- School Visits
- Staff meetings
- Training
- Appointment of Headteacher and senior staff
- Complaints from pupils, staff and parents

The governing body appoints committees of governors to look at specific issues such as the school's finances, staffing, curriculum and premises.

Who can be a school governor?

Anyone over 18 can be a school governor – you don't **have** to be a parent with a child at the school. However, every governing body includes **parent governors**, and it can be a rewarding way to be involved in your child's school.

The most important qualities for being a governor are **enthusiasm, commitment** and an **interest in education**. You don't need teaching experience, but it's useful to bring skills from other areas of your life. It can also be **time-consuming** – for example, if your school has to apply '**special measures**', which are set by Ofsted, to make general improvements.

What will I gain as a school governor?

Being a governor can be both challenging and rewarding. Governors get a great deal from the time and work they put in. It gives them an opportunity to:

- Make a real difference, and the chance to contribute to the good of the community, leading to real satisfaction and a sense of achievement
- To work as part of a team. Work with people and pupils from a variety of social, cultural and religious backgrounds
- To develop new skills and strengthen existing ones
- To gain an understanding of the decision-making process of school governing bodies and an awareness of the education system as a whole
- To undertake a variety of learning opportunities provided by the School and Governor Support Service on aspects of the role of the governor
- Enjoy the personal satisfaction and sense of achievement of working to improve the school
- Enjoy using your skills for the good of the local community

How do I become a school governor?

If you're interested in becoming a governor, talk to the current chair of governors who leads the board. When there's a **vacancy** for a **parent governor** all parents will be informed, and you'll have a chance to stand for **election**.

Before you put yourself forward, talk to your employer. Many employers recognise the role of school governor as useful work experience and may offer paid leave for governor duties.

What skills do I need to be a school governor?

There are no pre-requisite skills to becoming a governor. The ability to work as part of a team, a readiness to accept responsibility and the confidence to ask questions, listen and learn all form part of the role. You do not need to have any particular qualifications or have expertise in education, just time, energy, enthusiasm and commitment and the desire to make a difference. There are a range of skills which some members of the governing body may be able to bring with them from their experiences at home and at work, such as financial planning, personal issues etc, which will enhance the effectiveness of the governing body.

Governors come from different backgrounds reflecting the many interest groups involved in our schools, but they have one thing in common: they are dedicated to ensuring the children in their school have the best education possible.

Expect the role to be challenging but rewarding.

The School and Governor Support Service offer a varied programme of Learning Opportunities for governors and governing bodies to assist them in becoming more effective in their role and keep them updated on current issues. Governing bodies, however, also arrange in-house training within their school on relevant topics of their own choice.

There is a full induction programme for newly appointed governors.

How much time do governors give?

There are no hard and fast rules on how time will be involved. All schools are different and have individual needs. Normally governors serve for four years, but as volunteers they can leave at any time. Governors can normally apply to be re-appointed or re-elected if they so wish.

A governor's main task is to attend meetings of the school governing body. These normally take place once a term in the evening. Each committee (on issues such as finance, personnel, curriculum and premises) also normally meets once a term in the evening or during the day.

There is a need for governors to prepare for these meetings, including pre-reading of material circulated prior to every meeting, and also keeping up to date on related issues.

There are times when governors may need to get involved in governor duties during normal working hours, such as visiting the school, when difficult decisions on staff or pupils have to be made or a new Head Teacher is appointed. Those governors who are employed within business, will find many employers will support their staff by letting them have time off to work on governor duties.

As a governor you'll probably need to work eight to ten hours a month, assuming your school is in a reasonable position.