

Information for Prospective School Governors



Introduction to being a School Governor

Each school has a governing body which comprises members of the local community, parents, teachers, staff and representatives of the Local Education Authority. Governing Bodies of Church Schools (Voluntary Aided and Voluntary Controlled) are also represented by the church authority.

The governing body works with the Headteacher, school staff, the LA, the EAS, parents and, where appropriate the foundation body. It is a corporate body and no individual governor has any power to act alone (except the chairman in an emergency), but there are opportunities to make your own contribution in areas of particular interest such as special needs or health and safety. In return for your contribution and support you will develop your own skills in finance, personnel, committee work and communication.

“The role of governors and that of the governing body in raising standards in Wales can not be underestimated”

Leighton Andrews Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning 2009 - 2013

How do Governing Bodies work?

A governing body

- works with the Headteacher to set the strategic direction of the school
- is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the schools performance against set targets
- makes decisions collectively as a team and works closely with the Headteacher
- is legally required to meet at least once a term - many will meet twice
- will have a committee structure enabling issues to be discussed in detail before recommendations are put to the full governing body, some matters will also be delegated to a committee

A vital part of the role of school governors is providing effective support and challenge for their Headteachers and senior leaders. To support governors carry out this role mandatory training was introduced under the **Government of Maintained Schools (Training Requirements for Governors) (Wales) Regulations 2013**. The following sessions must be attended by newly appointed governors:

- **Induction training for governors**
The induction training for newly appointed or elected governors focuses on their roles and responsibilities and will give new governors the encouragement and confidence to be able to take a full and active part in governing body decision making.
- **Training for chairs of governors**
The training for chairs of governors focuses on leadership and maintaining effective relationships with key partners i.e. Headteachers, clerks to governing bodies and the local authority as well as providing chairs of governors with the necessary skills to run an efficient and effective governing body and to work with and provide challenge to Headteachers to raise standards.

- **Training for school governors in Wales on understanding school data**
The training on school performance data will help governors understand what the school data means for their schools, how they compare with schools in a similar position and circumstances and help them identify the action that needs to be taken to improve performance. An understanding of school data will give governors the confidence they need to take part in governing body discussions on data related information and to ask appropriate and searching questions.

An effective governing body is vital to ensure schools continue to serve pupils well with the aim of raising standards.

Governor Responsibilities

Although the Headteacher is responsible for the day to day management of the school, they will be implementing policies set by the governing body. Listed below are some of the many responsibilities held by governors:

- Agree the aims and values of the school
- Draw up and review the School Development Plan Make and review school policies
- Appoint staff
- Ensure the National Curriculum is taught
- Ensure needs of individual pupils are met, including special needs
- Ensure pupil Wellbeing and Safeguarding
- Prepare and circulate the Annual Report to Parents

Governing bodies also have responsibility for managing their individual school's budget. This means ensuring they obtain the best services possible and the best value for money.

What qualities do you need to be a School Governor?

- A wish to improve children's educational attainment
- A willingness to learn and ask questions and attend the mandatory training
- The ability to work as part of a team and appreciate the views and contribution of others, commitment, a sense of humor, the ability to respect confidentiality and some time to spare to attend meetings. Most governing bodies have a schedule of meetings for the year to help you plan your diary for meetings of the full governing body and whatever sub committees you become a member of. At other times, you may be asked to attend unscheduled meetings to respond to a variety of situations. You will be provided with adequate notice of these type of meetings.

In order to fulfill your role as a governor you would need to become familiar with the school. This can be done in a number of ways:

- Familiarise yourself with the relevant school performance data
- Visits to school, by prior arrangement, during session time
- Governors will receive invitations to a variety of events - assemblies, sports day, fetes etc. These can be an ideal opportunity to meet staff and see the school working in a less formal way
- Have you got a particular skill you could use to benefit the school? Have you got an interesting hobby you could talk to pupils about?

All of the above are ways to get involved and learn about the needs of your schools and its pupils. **Being a governor does not just mean attending a business meeting, now and again, in a deserted school!**

Having said that, business meetings are, of course, an essential part of school governance. You will need to discuss budgets, staffing matters, school policies, provision of services, health and safety etc. You will also receive reports for consultation from the LA and EAS. In most cases you will receive documentation in advance to give you time to study them and prepare any questions you may have.

The idea of making important decisions need not be daunting. Professional advice is always available from the Headteacher and, if appropriate, officers of the LA and EAS will also attend meetings to discuss specific issues. The majority of School Governing Bodies are clerked by an officer from the Education Achievement Service.

Training is provided by the EAS, at no cost to the individual. Some governors have many years experience and are willing to share this with new governors.

Employment law gives people the right to reasonable unpaid time off and some employers give paid leave for school governor duties.

If you think you have something to offer your local school – either professional expertise or a general interest in the education of today’s pupils. You may wish to become one of the following categories of School Governor:

Parents/Teachers/Support Staff

The Headteacher will inform all parents and staff when relevant vacancies arise. Nominations will be sought and, if necessary, a secret ballot held.

Community

You should contact the Headteacher or to the Governor Support Service to express an interest.

LA/Community Council/Foundation

These appointments will be made by the relevant council or church body.

The role of the school governor is demanding but very rewarding and is a good way to give back to your local community. Even if you decide not to seek election to a governing body yourself, please take part in any appropriate elections by voting for the candidate you feel will make a good governor.