

Become a school governor

What do school governors do?

Governors work with the headteacher and senior leadership team in the strategic development of the school and in raising standards of achievement. Duties include setting the school's vision, aims & objectives, approving the school budget and appointing the headteacher. Governors must be able to support and challenge the headteacher, so need to gain an understanding of the school's overall performance in order to explain its decisions and actions. Governing boards work as a team and make collective decisions.

Who are school governors?

There are more than 250,000 school governors in England and they form one of the largest volunteer groups in the country. Governors come from all walks of life:

Parent governors are elected by parents/carers of children at the school. The school organises elections when there is a resignation or a governor's term of office expires.

Staff governors are elected by the teaching and support staff at the school. The headteacher is a member of the governing board by virtue of their office.

Co-opted governors are appointed by the governing board according to their skills or experience. Prospective candidates should contact the chair of governors (via the school office) who will explain the procedure. This usually involves an informal meeting at the school and then a collective decision made at a full governing board meeting.

Foundation governors are appointed by the relevant Diocese in church schools.

- Church of England: Diocese of Chichester, 211 New Church Road, Hove BN3 4ED
- Catholic: Diocese of Arundel and Brighton, 4 Southgate Drive, Crawley RH10 6RP

Local authority (LA) governors are nominated by the LA Governors' Panel each term and then appointed by the governing body. LA governors normally have experience in education, governance or children's services and should be aware of any local/national priorities.

What skills do I need?

You may not need specific skills, unless you have been co-opted for a particular reason. However, all governors must:

- Be prepared to contribute to discussions and offer challenge and support to the headteacher
- Have an interest in the welfare of children and their education
- Be willing to learn and attend relevant training
- Have good interpersonal, teamwork and communication skills
- Have a respect for confidentiality
- Be committed to equal opportunities
- Have a willingness to fulfil the role of the governor with energy and enthusiasm and a commitment to attend governors' meetings regularly

Being a representative

Governors do not go to meetings with instructions from their stakeholder group (eg parents or staff) about how to vote. They bring the voice of a representative member of their group, so should understand the key views of their group in order to inform their governing board. They then vote after they have heard all the views, in accordance with what is in the best interests of the pupils in the school. Once a collective decision has been made, all governors must accept it as being the majority view and be loyal to that view.

What is the time commitment?

Governing boards usually meet together once or twice a term. There may also be committee meetings to attend (eg Resources or Curriculum). If you do have a particular expertise, this is where your skills could be of use. You may also volunteer to work alongside a member of staff who has a specific responsibility – eg special educational needs. The time commitment varies but in the beginning you should expect to spend around 10 days a year on duties. This could increase to around 20 days if you take on a key role such as chairing (equating to half a day per week during term time) or more when recruiting a headteacher.

Is training provided?

Brighton & Hove's School & Governance Development Team provides phone advice and guidance to clerks and governors, as well as induction and further training – all this is free of charge to the individual. There are also regular briefings to update you on national and local developments. For more information, go to <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/governors>.

What's in it for me?

You will gain some valuable experiences that will have an impact on your personal and professional life. You will meet new people, develop teamwork skills and learn more about how schools work. You could gain experience of budget setting, interviewing for staff or developing policies. If you eventually become a chair of governors, we provide support and training to develop your leadership skills and confidence.

Above all, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have made a real difference to the development of children, young people, their school and the community.

What should I do next?

For an informal chat and to find out which schools have vacancies, contact the School & Governance Development Team (details below).

Useful links

- www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/governors
- <https://twitter.com/BHSchoolGovs>
- <http://www.nga.org.uk/Be-a-Governor.aspx> (National Governance Association)

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