

Parent Governors

Introduction

Governing bodies are made up of different types of governors. With the exception of Local Authority governors (who are selected by the authority), all other types of governors are either nominated by the governing body itself, or elected by the group they represent, such as school staff or parents of children in the school. Any parent who wants to become a member of the governing body must be elected. All elections have to follow certain guidelines to make sure they are fair and within the law.

Why do we need parent governors on a governing body?

Parent governors are an important component in achieving an effective and well-balanced governing body. It is very important that parents stand for election to the governing body so that the views of parents with children at the school are represented on it. Otherwise, a parent may be appointed to serve who has no children in the school and who knows very little about the school and its local community.

What are parent governors expected to do?

Once elected or appointed, a parent governor takes on the role of school governor. As part of the governing body, they should provide strategic management to a school, act as a critical friend and ensure that the school is accountable for its actions.

In legal terms all governors are equal, no type of governor is any more important or influential than any other. All governors have a right to take part in discussion on all items, put items on the agenda and so on. The only exceptions to this general rule occur where the child of the parent governor concerned is being discussed or the individual governor has some other direct personal interest in the matter, for example a financial or employment interest which is greater than that of the other governors.

Parent governors need to be aware that they share a collective responsibility with other governors and can never act alone unless they have the express approval of the full governing body. They are not there to override existing school systems, for example, relating to individual parental complaints. They are a two-way channel of communication, feeding views of parents as a whole into governing body meetings, and then reporting back to parents on decisions reached without breaking the confidentiality of the meetings.

Who is eligible to stand for election as a parent governor?

A 'parent' is a person with 'parental responsibility', as defined by the [Children Act](#). When we talk about 'eligible parents', we are referring to parents who have a child registered at the school at the time of election and is eligible to vote, to nominate candidates and to stand for election to the governing body.

Are there any restrictions?

All parents are entitled to be nominated for election to the governing body except:

- If they are elected members of the local authority in which the school is situated
- If they work at the school for more than 500 hours in any school year (August 1 to July 31)

There are other circumstances, a parent may not be eligible to become a governor. For example, if s/he is or has been judged bankrupt or has certain criminal convictions. None of the above will stop them from nominating or voting in the process..

How is the election process conducted?

Any parent wanting to stand for election should complete the nomination form which must be proposed and seconded by two other individuals entitled to take part in the election process. The application form includes the opportunity to provide a short personal statement. This should then be returned to the Headteacher by the time and date entered on the nomination form (usually a two week period between the distribution of nomination forms and the closing date for return of the forms).

Any eligible parent whose child is absent from school at the time when the governing body elections take place, is entitled to receive information and relevant paperwork to enable them to participate in any election process.

What if there are no nominations received?

If not enough parents' stand for election to the governing body, the other members of the governing body must legally fill the vacancies by appointing other parents. These parents do not need to have children at the school concerned.

According to Guide to the Law - if insufficient parents stand for election the governing body can appoint:

- a parent of a registered pupil at the school, or if that is not possible;
- a parent of a former pupil at the school, or if that is not possible;
- a parent of a child of, or under, compulsory school age

This also applies to community special schools and foundation special schools, but for these schools the appointment criteria are:

- a parent of a registered pupil at the school, or if that is not possible;
- a parent of a former pupil at the school, or if that is not possible;
- a parent of a child of or under compulsory school age with special educational needs for which the school is approved, or if that is not possible;
- a parent with experience of educating a child with special educational needs"

What if the number of candidates is equal to the number of vacancies?

If the number of candidates is the same as (or fewer) than the number of vacancies then those candidates will be duly elected unopposed.

What if there are too many nominations?

If there are more candidates than vacancies, an election must be arranged. The Headteacher must advise parents of the need to hold an election, the time and date of the count and an invitation to all candidates to be present or have representatives at the count.

What happens once we know who has been elected?

The Headteacher must inform all parents of the results as soon as possible.

The Clerk of the governing body will inform the governor support service, so that our records can be amended and we can ensure that parent governors receive information from the LA relevant to their role, including details of the Induction training.

How long will parent governors stay elected for?

Generally, a four year period of office is served by parent governors (unless the governing body have agreed to a shorter term of office), and parents can remain on the governing body after their children have left the school for the remainder of their term of office, if they wish to do so. They may resign at any time by giving written notice to the Clerk to Governors.

What support will parent governors receive?

Governors are not expected to be instant experts. Once elected, successful candidates will be provided with relevant information by the Local Authority and the school and they can take part in training events to help them learn about their role.