



**NETHERAVON ALL SAINTS C of E PRIMARY SCHOOL**

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# **The Role of a Parent Governor** (under The Memorandum and Articles of Association March 2014)

## Introduction

This booklet explains the role of governors and specifically Parent Governors at Netheravon All Saints C of E Primary School. The School is a private company limited by guarantee. It was incorporated on the 7<sup>th</sup> March 2014 when it became Netheravon All Saints Academy Trust.

We value the contribution made by you and all governors to the success of our school and recognises the time, energy and commitment that all governors give.

Governing bodies are an integral part of school leadership, setting the ethos of the school, driving continuous improvement, supporting, challenging and holding to account the head teacher and other members of the school leadership team by negotiating stretching targets for improvements in standards and monitoring progress towards them and overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

Your role as a governor is strategic and will continue to evolve to meet the needs of children in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

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## Categories of school governors

The current model of governance in schools is a stakeholder model; people who are representative of all those groups which have a vested interest, or a stake, in the effective delivery of education and care in a school have a voice in how their schools operate. The primary consideration in the appointment and election of new governors should be the skills and experience the governing body needs to be effective.

Our Governing Body is made up of 12 Trustees (under The Memorandum and Articles of Association) (March 2014):

Parent governors (2)	Authorised Representative of SDBE (Salisbury Diocesan Board of Education)
Staff governor (up to 2)	The Incumbent (The vicar)
Co-opted governors (up to 2)	Associate governors
Foundation governors (4)	Headteacher

Those eligible to be elected as the staff governor may also be appointed as co-opted governors so long as their number, when counted with the headteacher and the staff governor, does not exceed one third of the total membership of the governing body.

## Role of the governing body

The governing body is the strategic leader of the school and has a vital role to play in making sure every child receives the best possible education. In all types of schools, governing bodies should have a strong focus on three core strategic functions:

- a. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- b. Holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff; and
- c. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

These functions are reflected in regulations that came into force in September 2013 and in the criteria Ofsted inspectors use to judge the effectiveness of governance in schools.

Key activities of the governing body:

- ◆ Understand the school – pupil attainment and progress; pupil behaviour, attendance and safety and teaching quality and staff development
- ◆ Set the school's strategic direction – the vision, ethos and values; set priorities for school improvement and consider governance structure
- ◆ Commission action – agree improvement targets and strategies; agree allocation of resources and agree how to monitor and review progress
- ◆ Performance manage school leaders – appoint headteacher and support their leadership; hold school leaders to account for progress and ensure financial probity and efficiency
- ◆ Ensure governing body is fit for purpose – clarify role and purpose; review constitution and ways of working and ensure members have the necessary skills

An effective governing body will use the skills of all its members.

## Parent Governors

Parent governors are elected by other parents at the school. Any parent, or carer, of a registered pupil at the school at the time of election is eligible to stand for election as a parent governor. Parent governors may continue to hold office until the end of their term of office even if their child leaves the school.

Schools must make every reasonable effort to fill parent governor vacancies through elections. The Regulations, however, make provision for the governing body to appoint parent governors where:

- ◆ not enough parents stand for election,

Governing bodies may only appoint as a parent governor a parent who has, in their

opinion, the skills to contribute to effective governance and the success of the school.

Every effort should be made upfront to avoid potential difficulties later by informing prospective candidates of the nature of the role and securing their agreement to a clear set of expectations for behaviour and conduct – as set out in a code of conduct. The 2012 Roles, Procedures and Allowances regulations set out the basis on which governing bodies may suspend governors, including parent governors.

A parent governor believes that parents should have a say in matters affecting their children's education.

You should meet the relevant statutory eligibility criteria for school governors as set out in the Regulations and you will have:

- ◆ an interest in all the children's futures
- ◆ a desire to make a difference
- ◆ a willingness to accept responsibility
- ◆ an ability to work in a team, ask questions, listen and learn

As a parent governor you hold the unique position of having a parental viewpoint. Through the children you will have first-hand experience of the curriculum and how the school is perceived from the consumers' point of view. You will be able to bring this perspective to the strategic management of the school.

As a parent governor you do not have to vote in a particular way because you have been pressed to do so by parents. Objectivity, however, is essential. You are not there to promote the interests of your own children but **all** children. Parent governors are elected by other parents and it is important to establish a rapport with the parental body that elected you, whilst continuing to maintain a strategic approach to school governance.

You are disqualified from being elected or appointed as a parent governor if you are an elected member of the local authority or are paid to work at the school for more than 500 hours in any twelve consecutive months.

### **As an effective parent governor you:**

- ◆ help to decide the priorities for improving the school
- ◆ make yourself available to parents and listen to other parents' opinions and take account of them as you contribute to governors' decisions
- ◆ work in partnership with the headteacher, senior leadership team and cooperatively with other governors to raise standards and improve outcomes for all children
- ◆ prepare for meetings by reading papers beforehand
- ◆ take responsibility for your own learning and development as a governor including attending training
- ◆ attend full governing body and relevant committee meetings promptly, regularly, and for the full time
- ◆ read briefings and newsletters for governors; present a balanced view of issues

- representing different sections of the community
- ◆ promote the interests of the school in the wider community
- ◆ be loyal to the decisions made by the governing body
- ◆ respect the confidentiality of governing body affairs
- ◆ never promise to 'solve a problem' on your own
- ◆ never press your own child's case at the expense of others
- ◆ declare an interest and withdraw from any meeting where you, a partner or close relative or associate stands to gain, or where you are so close to a matter discussed it is difficult to be impartial
- ◆ have regard to the broader responsibilities as a governor of a public institution in regard to promoting accountability for the actions and performance of the governing body

## **Time commitment**

Governors are expected to attend all full governing body meetings and committee meetings as appropriate.

The full governing body meets at least three times per year (once per term) and there are also committee meetings that you may be invited to join. Our full governing body meetings are held on Wednesday evenings at 6pm. Other committee meetings take place during school hours

In addition to meetings you will also be expected to visit the school in action. This is an essential part of your role, particularly in relation to monitoring and evaluating. Often governors are invited to attend school events such as assemblies and sports days.

Although you will have a good knowledge of the school through your child's experience, formal visits as a governor are an essential part of your role.

Note: a governor is disqualified from holding office if they fail to attend governing body meetings without the consent of the governing body – for a continuous period of six months, beginning with the date of the first meeting missed.

## **Time off from work**

Under employment law, employers must give employees who are school governors, reasonable time off to carry out their duties. The employee and employer have to agree on what is reasonable. Employers may give time off with pay but do not have to do so.

## Communication and confidentiality

You have a significant part to play in raising the awareness of the role of governors amongst parents and in enhancing home-school communication in general. There are several ways you could do this which might include, for example:

- ♦ playing a part in drafting surveys to seek parents' views and analysing the feedback

You can also help to ensure that the governing body keeps a clear focus on ensuring that the school provides an effective, safe and stimulating environment for all children. If, however, an issue comes to a vote, you should vote on the basis of what you consider to be in the best interests of the school.

The work of the governing body is recorded in the minutes.

As a parent governor you are free to report any decision in advance of publication of the minutes if you are sure that you are not breaching a confidence of the governing body and that the information you are presenting is accurate and that it is appropriate for you to report the decision.

Note - you would be breaching the confidence of the governing body if you reported how individuals voted, comments made by individuals or individual discussions. When reporting on decisions taken by the governing body you should use 'we' and not 'they' as you are part of the decision making group. Even if you personally voted against the final decision you must support the corporate decision making process and take ownership of the outcome.

## Complaints

Parent governors are not there to provide an alternative route to addressing individual parental concerns, although if you do become aware of more widespread disquiet about the school's policy and practice then you should alert the headteacher and chair. Sometimes a parent governor may be approached with a complaint.

If a parent has a concern or complaint which is very specific to their child, you should, if approached, advise them to follow the school procedure; do not get involved. It is not your role to hear the complaint details. They should try to resolve their concerns by speaking to the appropriate teacher. If the parent remains dissatisfied with the outcome, suggest that they make an appointment to speak to the headteacher or head of year. You should guide parents regarding appropriate lines of action, making them aware of the school's complaints policy and procedures. If a parent raises issues of general concern with you, you should suggest that they make these known to the headteacher.

Being a parent governor does not disqualify you from your usual rights as a parent, including making a complaint.

## Allowances for expenses

School governors provide a voluntary service, and cannot be paid for their role as a governor. But they can receive out of pocket expenses. This may include reasonable expenses to cover travel costs or child care costs incurred as a result of fulfilling their role as governor - this does not include payments to cover loss of earnings for attending meetings. Where the board has a delegated budget, whether to pay allowances and what allowances might reasonably be paid are matters for the board to decide.

Travel expenses must be at a rate not exceeding the HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) approved mileage rates which are changed annually and are on HMRC website. Other expenses should be paid on provision of a receipt and be limited to the amount shown on the receipt.

## Term of office

You are appointed as a parent governor for a term of four years unless the school's Instrument of Government has specified a lesser period. A shorter term of office can be helpful in nursery schools where children may just be present for one or two years. Whatever the term of office, you do not have to stop when your child leaves the school but when your agreed term has expired. You may resign at any time by giving written notice to your Clerk of governors.

## Nolan principles of public life

1. **Integrity:** do not allow the influence of bodies outside the school to affect your duties
2. **Accountability:** make choices on merit
3. **Objectivity:** submit to appropriate scrutiny
4. **Openness:** only restrict information when the public interest clearly demands this/ data protection
5. **Honesty:** declare any private interest
6. **Leadership:** promote and support these principles by leadership and example
7. **Selflessness:** act always in the public interest, not for personal gain