

Being a Parent Governor

Parent governors are in a unique position on a governing body. Not only do parent governors have to work in the best interests of the school, but they have to balance this with their natural desire to see the best outcomes for their own child(ren). The aim of this briefing paper is to offer advice to new parent governors on their specific role and suggest ways of handling some of the tricky situations which may arise.



As a parent governor it will sometimes feel that you have to know everything about the school, but can't talk about it; you have to be on everyone's side; if you don't do paid work, people imagine that you have loads of free time.....and you have to be able to juggle all these expectations. As a parent you will already be an expert juggler, but developing your role as a governor will take time.

You are not alone! There is advice, help and support you can tap into....and reading this guidance note is the first step.

Parent governors are:

- ✓ well placed to understand parents' views and to remind the governing body how matters being discussed affect parents;
- ✓ individuals! How you vote on any decision is up to you;
- ✓ in a good position to help the governing body to communicate effectively with parents;
- ✓ equal in status to all other governors.

Parent governors are not:

- ✗ expected to gather the views of other parents and take them to the governing body;
- ✗ simply expected to represent the interests of parents;
- ✗ a link between parents and the governing body;
- ✗ expected to vote as instructed by other parents.

What are the good bits about being a parent governor?

- ◆ You have a very privileged and responsible role.
- ◆ You have the opportunity to make a difference, not only for your children, but for children in years to come.
- ◆ You have the opportunity to make a difference for other parents, and to influence the way in which school works with them.
- ◆ You will learn a lot and develop new skills.

How to fulfil your role

- ◆ Attend governing body meetings regularly and play an active role in committees and decision-making.
- ◆ Learn all you can about the school.
- ◆ Consider how the governing body communicate with parents? Could you help them to improve links?
- ◆ How accessible is the school – how easy is it for parents to go into school to discuss things with the headteacher or teachers? Could you give feedback to help the school to be more open and welcoming?
- ◆ How accessible are the governors – do parents ever get the opportunity to meet with governors; do they know how to get in touch with the chair of governors if they need to? Could you encourage the governing body to be more visible?
- ◆ Learn how the school handles complaints and read the complaints policy. If another parent approaches you with a complaint, advise them to speak to the headteacher.
- ◆ Be approachable to other parents, but make sure you are clear about your role.
- ◆ Always represent the school positively.
- ◆ As a governor you are one of a group and must never act alone.
- ◆ Always support the decisions of the full governing body. Have your say on decisions in meetings and vote in the way you wish; but then support the outcomes of votes – even if you disagree with them.
- ◆ Always, always, always observe confidentiality. You will get to know a lot of highly sensitive and confidential information – don't discuss it with anyone who is not a governor. Remember, a governor can be suspended for serious breaches of confidentiality.