

## Ex-officio Foundation Governor – some questions answered

Foundation governors are either appointed or take the role by virtue of office that they hold. This latter is known as the ex-officio foundation governor and is usually the local incumbent or priest. The ex-officio is one of the school's foundation governors, and not in addition to them.

### What are my responsibilities?

There are high expectations of governing bodies. They are the strategic leaders of our schools and have a vital role to play in making sure every child gets the best possible education. This is reflected in the law, which states that the purpose of governing bodies is to '*conduct the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement at the school*'.

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; and
- c) Overseeing the financial performance of the school.

Your responsibilities as a school governor are laid out in some detail in the 'Governor's Handbook'

([http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/395789/governors\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/395789/governors_handbook.pdf)) but in essence governors hold an overview of the life and work of the school.

Governors do not get involved in the day to day running of the school, which is the role of the headteacher.

Governors have no individual power as all responsibilities and decisions are shared collectively. The governors are a corporate body.

### Do I have extra responsibilities as a Foundation Governor?

As a foundation governor your responsibilities are no more of than those of your fellow governors. However a foundation governor is someone who has the skills to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school, and who is appointed for the purpose of securing:

- **In all cases**, that the school's religious character is preserved and developed; and
- That the school is conducted in accordance with the foundation's governing documents, including where appropriate any Trust Deed relating to the school.

Foundation governors will therefore be committed to supporting the principles underlying the original Trust Deed of the school in accordance with the principles and practices of the Church of England.

It is also important to act as a link between the school and the Parochial Church Council (PCC), encouraging working together for the benefit of the school, the parish and the local community.

### **I am a busy person – how much time commitment will be required as a governor?**

All governing bodies are legally required to hold at least three meetings per school year, but many now meet six times. You may also be asked to join a committee, which will involve attendance at extra meetings. A foundation governor is ideally suited to be a member of the Ethos, or Vision and Values, committee. This committee's chief purpose is to oversee and monitor the Christian foundation of the school.

On top of this you will need to set aside time for reading and considering paperwork, visiting the school in line with the visiting framework of your governing body and attending training sessions. As a foundation governor much of this will be focused around the four core areas from the Statutory Inspection for Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) framework.

### **Is it the usual practice for the Incumbent to be the Chair of Governors?**

It is common practice for the Incumbent to be the Chair of the Governors but *not the usual* practice. Any member of the governing body may now self-nominate for the role of Chair at the election for this position, in line with the school's agreed procedures. It is the practice in Gloucester Diocese to **discourage** the incumbent from taking the role of Chair.

### **Am I responsible for appointing Foundation Governors at my school?**

In the Gloucester Diocese the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) appoints foundation governors. As the Incumbent it is your responsibility to work with the PCC to find and nominate suitable people to the Board who are willing to become foundation governors. The DBE must ensure foundation governors have the skills to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school, as well as be willing and able to preserve and develop the Christian foundation. The 'Foundation Governor Application form', therefore, includes a Skills Audit. All nominees, whether new or continuing, must complete and submit a 'Foundation Governor Application form', which is available here (<http://www.gloucester.anglican.org/schools/leadership/governance/>).

### **I have more than one church school in my Benefice; I cannot be Ex-officio Foundation Governor for all of them, what can I do?**

Under the Constitution Regulations and Instrument of Government it is the responsibility of the Archdeacons to appoint a replacement Substitute Ex-officio foundation governor at a school. Initially therefore this situation needs to be brought to the Archdeacon's attention via the Strategic Lead for Governance. It is acceptable for the Incumbent or the school to suggest a suitable person to the Archdeacon who is willing to fulfil this role. Details can be found here (<http://www.gloucester.anglican.org/schools/leadership/governance/>).

The Archdeacon also has the power to request the governing body remove an ex-officio foundation governor should the need arise.

### **Am I expected to spend more time in school than my fellow governors because I am the Incumbent?**

You will not be expected to put in any more time than your fellow governors, as a governor, because you are the Incumbent. However the school will undoubtedly have expectations of you as Incumbent, which you will need to discuss with the headteacher.

### **Is it appropriate for me to have a good relationship with my headteacher?**

It is both appropriate and good practice to develop a good professional relationship with your headteacher and indeed all who work in the school. The nature of the relationship will depend on your role as governor, Incumbent, Chair, or maybe a combination of all three.

### **Can I tell my school how to conduct RE lessons and Collective Worship?**

You cannot **tell** your school how to conduct RE lessons and Collective Worship, as this is to do with the day-to-day running of the school. However, in line with your duties as a foundation governor, you will be able to influence your school's '*distinctiveness*' in these areas by taking a keen interest in policies, and in your capacity as Incumbent by offering to take part. In addition you might encourage your governors to adopt the SIAMS toolkit as a monitoring tool for these areas.

### **Is there a financial implication from my church to the school?**

When they undertake Capital Building projects governors at a Voluntary Aided school are required to make a 10% contribution to costs.

Governors obtain their funding from a number of sources to pay the contributions. These include PCC contributions, trust funds, income from the hire of the school premises, PTA contributions, and of course fundraising but there is no obligation on the PCC to provide funds.

### **I am a Trustee for my school too; are these responsibilities different?**

The Trustees and governors have separate roles and responsibilities. The Trustees as a body meet infrequently usually to consider a request, from governors or Local Authority (LA), to extend or modify the school buildings. The Trustees would usually support any request to improve facilities but could request modifications to the design of a project, or proposed building materials, if they consider the proposals to be detrimental or inappropriate to their building.

Governors and the LA often forget that Trustees permission **must** be obtained prior to any building works being undertaken. As a foundation governor, the Incumbent is able to be pro-active to prevent this problem from occurring.

When a school closes or transfers to a replacement site the Trustees have to determine the future of the premises in accordance with legislation and guidance from the Charity Commission.