

Become a school governor in Lancashire

Being a governor is a very rewarding experience. There are estimated to be more than 350,000 school and academy governors in the UK from all walks of life and backgrounds, making them the largest volunteer force in the country. They perform a vital role in making a real difference to children's education.

Becoming a governor is a great way to contribute to your local community and improve the lives of local children. You don't need specialist knowledge of education or expertise – governing boards need a range of people who can bring the skills and experience they've developed at work, in their personal life or in voluntary roles in the community.

To be an effective governor, you need commitment, time to attend meetings, training and to get to know the school, a willingness to ask challenging questions and to work as an enthusiastic member of the governing board team with the aim of promoting high standards of educational achievement. Ideally, you should also have some basic IT skills (e.g. using e-mail and the internet).

Have you ever wondered what school governors do?

Across the county there are over a thousand members of our community helping to support school leadership teams by volunteering their time and expertise as school governors - but what is it about the role which encourages so many committed volunteers to apply?

Making a difference

All schools have a Board of Governors that provides strategic leadership. It is responsible for raising educational standards, ensuring money is well spent and the strategic vision of the school. Being a school governor is a fantastic opportunity to have an impact on education and positively influence children's lives.

Use and develop your skills

As well as becoming more involved with your community, school governors develop a range of both new and existing skills. You do not need to be a parent or have worked in education to be a governor, as a wide range of skills are needed on a Board. These include finance, H.R., buildings, health and safety, legal, complaints, data analysis, project management etc. Or it could be softer skills like working as a team to come to a vital decision. Being a governor is an opportunity to develop your skills. A wide range of training is also available from the Local Authority.

Improve your knowledge about the education sector

As a new school governor, you are not expected to come with a working knowledge of the education sector. This role will allow you will gain a fascinating insight into how schools work and how the education sector is changing and continues to change. You are guaranteed to gain a further appreciation of the work of teachers and school leaders as well as the type of challenges schools face.

It's a challenge

There's no denying that being a school governor is a challenge, but that's a good thing - because it's important. It may be that you are putting your professional skills to use in a new context or getting to grips with a whole new sector, but most governors find this very rewarding.

The fact that the role is so enjoyable is probably one of the main reasons why there are so many governors giving up their time to help.

What qualities make an effective governor?

- a strong commitment to the role and to improving outcomes for children
- the inquisitiveness to question and analyse
- the willingness to learn
- good inter-personal skills
- appropriate levels of literacy in English (unless a governing board is prepared to make special arrangements)
- sufficient numeracy skills to understand basic data
- willingness to attend appropriate training

Types of governors

There are many different categories of governor including:

- Co-opted – appointed by the Board
- Parent – elected by the parents
- Staff – elected by the staff
- Foundation – appointed by the Diocese/ Trust
- Authority - appointed by the Board with the agreement of the Local Authority.

The type of governor you will become depends on your situation; however all governors have the same roles and responsibilities once part of the governing board.

What is the time commitment?

The average is 10-15 hours per term; this includes attending meetings, background reading and school visits. Governors are expected to take an interest in the life of the school, to attend some of its events during the academic year and to see something of the school at work.

Being a governor is a public duty and governors have a right to reasonable time off work, although this may be without pay. You should look at your company's policy to see what entitlement you have.