

School Governor- Frequently Asked Questions

School governors represent the largest volunteer force in the country with over a quarter of a million volunteers supporting state schools. Being a school governor provides a range of opportunities, from learning new skills, supporting your local community as well as giving back to society.

If you are considering being a governor, then you probably have a range of questions about the role. For example, what does it entail, what skills are required and what time commitment is it likely to take up?

Below we have tried to provide answers to some of these frequently asked questions. However, if you have further questions, then please contact the Clerk to the Trust and its Local Governing Boards governorsclerk@tlptrust.com and we will endeavour to provide you with more information.

1 Who are school Governors?

Governors are people who wish to make a positive contribution to the school and the education of its children. They will have an important input toward the educational achievements of its pupils. Governors come from different backgrounds and offer different skills and experiences. We value this diversity and strive to extend this because the breadth of experiences offers wider insight and perspectives, thereby helping the school to grow and develop further.

You do not need to have experience of working in schools or education to be a governor.

2 What is the role of a School Governor?

All governors are members of the School's Local Governing Board (LGB). The overriding responsibility for the LGB and individual governors is to work in partnership with the head teacher to promote continuous improvement in the performance of the school. We expect governors to work together as a team. They contribute to the development of the strategic direction of the school and act as a "critical friend" that provides supportive challenge to the school's senior leadership team, holding them to account for the educational performance and outcomes of the school and its pupils.

3 Are there any other areas of responsibility that governors are accountable for beyond the educational performance of the school?

The primary focus of our governors is on the educational performance of the school. This includes the curriculum, local safeguarding arrangements and the wellbeing of pupils and staff.

Our school is part of a family of schools within The Learning Partnership Multi-Academy Trust (The Trust). Because we are part of a multi academy trust (MAT), governors have fewer responsibilities than those who govern in a local authority-maintained state school. The MAT has a board of Trustees who are ultimately responsible and accountable for all the schools in the Trust, so they take responsibility for things like finance, estates, health and safety, and staff performance.

4 *Are there different types of governors?*

At school level governors all carry equal responsibility. We do, however, have two categories of governors; “appointed governors” and “parent governors”. On a day-to-day basis there is no difference between the roles. The reasons we have these two roles is to ensure that the LGB has representation from the local community and key stakeholders, of which parents/guardians of pupils is a key one. The only real difference is that there is a slight variation in the appointment process between the two categories (see below).

5 *How much time do I have to commit to being a governor?*

The actual time that an individual governor commits will vary between governors. We recognise that governors are volunteers and have other life commitments beyond the school. However, we do have a minimum expectation that governors will attend each meeting of the LGB, visit the school from time to time, and undertake any necessary or statutory training.

There are normally four LGB meetings per year, with the typical LGB meeting lasting around 2 hours. We encourage governors to visit the school at least once per term, with visits usually lasting between 1-3 hours. The time needed to complete training will vary, although a significant amount of training is available on-line, and we find that this offers greater flexibility for governors to complete their training when it is most convenient for them.

6 *Where and when do governors meet?*

Governor meetings are held in the school. We normally hold four meetings each academic year, although on occasions we may hold additional meetings if there is specific need or an issue to address. Sometimes we hold additional meetings on-line, although the preferred method is to meet face-to-face.

Meetings are usually held at the end of the school day or early evening. We periodically discuss with governors the timings of meetings to ensure that we can secure maximum participation and attendance. As a guide, LGB meetings will normally start at an agreed time somewhere between 4pm and 6pm.

Governor visits to school take place during the school day. Individual governors and the headteacher/ senior staff will arrange a mutually convenient time for each visit, and in doing this will also agree the scope and purpose of the visit.

7 *What skills and experience do I need to be a governor?*

We value having governors from the widest range of backgrounds and experiences. We do not ask, nor expect, a governor to hold a particular qualification or work in a specific job or sector. The most effective LGBs have the greatest diversity, as this enables different perspectives to be considered. We particularly value having governors (parents and appointed) with a knowledge and understanding of our local communities so that when taking decisions, the school can benefit from this local insight.

We offer and provide a range of training to support all our governors. We provide this training for free. Whilst some training is a statutory requirement, governors can often pick and choose how much training they want to undertake each year.

From time to time the governors will undertake a short questionnaire that seeks information about skills and experience. We then use this to help identify future training needs and support for both the LGB collectively and governors individually.

8 What training and support do you provide governors?

We do appreciate that there is quite a bit to take in as a new governor, and it does take time to fully understand your role and responsibilities. However, there is a lot of support available to help you and we encourage you to ask if you are unclear or unsure.

Upon appointment all new governors are provided with a structured induction programme. You will be invited to the school to meet the Head and will also have an opportunity to speak with or meet the Chair of the local governing body (LGB). You can also chat informally with the Clerk of the LGB.

New governors are introduced to our local governor portal. The portal has a range of resources specific to the Trust and the School. These include historical meeting documents as well as an on-line governor handbook packed with information in bit-sized chunks that you can dip in and out of at any time. The glossary of acronyms is probably one of the most useful sections for those new to the education sector!

The local portal also includes an external news feed, which enables governors to access information and remain updated about stories and issues taking place at a national level.

We provide all governors with free access to a significant on-line learning resource package. This is provided by the National Governance Association (NGA) and includes training materials and videos that span almost every topic related to governance. The NGA also host occasional webinars on current topics.

9 How long do governors serve? What is the term of office?

A term of office for a governor is normally around 4 years. We align the term of office to the school year although governors can and do join the LGB mid-way through the academic year. Governors can seek to serve an additional term of office at the end of their current term, if they so wish, although there is no obligation to so.

10 Do I have to complete my term of office, or can I finish early?

Governors can resign at any time. We recognise that governors are volunteers, and that life-circumstances and commitments often change with time. If you are considering a shorter term of office, or are thinking about resigning when in post, we encourage you to speak with the Chair or Clerk in the first instance.

11 How do I become a governor?

If you are interested in becoming a governor, please contact the Clerk in the first instance. We can then arrange a time to discuss the next steps with you. We would be delighted to chat with you on an informal basis about the role.

From time-to-time vacancies arise for parent governors. When these occur, we normally publicise the opportunity to parents /guardians via an email from the school or include a notification in the regular newsletter. For parent governor opportunities we will first seek either an expression of interest or completion of a nomination form by a published date. If there are more candidates than vacancies, then we may run an election to identify a preferred candidate.

12 What checks are undertaken to be a governor?

We are required by law to undertake a number of checks and seek self-declarations before appointing a governor. In brief, the law requires governors to be aged over 18, not be bankrupt, not be disqualified from being a company director or charity trustee, are not holding a criminal record, and are not barred from working with children and vulnerable people.

As part of the final stage of approval we require the governor-designate to undertake a DBS check.

When taking up the position of governors we expect each governor to agree to abide by a code of conduct and to adopt the Nolan Principles (The Seven Principles of Public Life) that support effective governance.

More details on the disqualification of individuals from taking up the role of governor can be found in the 2012 School Governance Regulations.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2012/1034/schedule/4/made>

And finally,

Thank you for your interest in school governance. Being a governor can be stimulating, enjoyable and rewarding. If you have the enthusiasm and desire to become involved in the running of our school, then please contact us directly and also consider putting yourself forward for vacancies that arise. Parent governors are an important component in achieving an effective and well-balanced governing body.