



The Role Of Parent Governor in a maintained primary school

The role of Parent Governor can become confused, with the need to separate your role as a parent with a child in the school, and that of your position of parent governor. It can be a very fulfilling role, where you get to have a real input into the direction follows, and most parent governors find their time worthwhile and satisfying.

Below are some excerpts from Dfe and Ofsted regarding Parent Governor role.

As a parent governor you hold the unique position of having a parental viewpoint. Through your 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.

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
- declare an interest and withdraw from any meeting where you, a partner or close relative or family friend 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 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.

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.

If a member of staff has a concern or complaint, 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 a parent remains dissatisfied with the outcome, suggest that they make an appointment to speak to the Headteacher or Deputy Head Teacher. 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.

A parent governor is a representative and not a delegate of parents.

Top tips for parent governors

- **Keep the parental perspective in mind.** Approach every issue with the question "What do I as a parent think about this? What would other parents think about this?"
- **Get it in writing.** If another parent approaches you with a grievance, ask them to speak to the school directly or put it in writing. This is the correct procedure, and helps to separate genuine complaints from the customary grumbles.
- **Take a step back.** If you have an issue concerning your child, ask his/her other parent to lead the discussion with the school. If this isn't possible, remember that you are acting as a parent only – leave your governor hat at home!

The governing body and Headteacher should establish clear expectations

The governing body and Headteacher should establish clear expectations to make sure that everyone understands their respective roles.

Parent governors, like other members of the governing body, should be aware that their role is strategic rather than operational.

The Headteacher should be allowed to exercise their professional judgement, while the governing body should hold them to account through robust challenge and questioning.

It is perfectly reasonable for governors to ask head teachers to justify their choices.

For example, questions to ask about changes to the curriculum could include:

- How and why is the curriculum changing?

- Are the changes in the best interests of the pupils?
- Are the changes based on best practice from elsewhere?

While governors are not necessarily qualified to make decisions about the curriculum, they can ensure that the head teacher's decisions are well thought through.

If a parent governor feels that they are being undervalued, they should raise their concerns with the chair. If they are not able to resolve the issue at this level, the vice chair should be the next point of contact.