



DIOCESE OF
LINCOLN

BOARD OF
EDUCATION



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Governance in Church Schools

Information for Parochial Church Councils on the
appointment of prospective School Governors

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Introducing Foundation Governors

The very first primary schools were church schools. A new charity was founded in 1811 called the *National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church*. Through its grants parish schools were established up and down the country. They carried the main burden of primary education in this country. Primary schools supported by rates and general taxation did not come into being until several decades later.

Today, about a sixth of primary pupils attend church schools. In this Diocese the figure is 4000, (29% of primary places). Church schools are an intrinsic part of the state education system but the church retains various rights and privileges, including that of appointing Foundation Governors.

Foundation Governors are appointed by the Church at parish or diocesan level. They are full members of the Governing Body of the school and, like all governors, are expected to play a full role in the life of the Governing Body, together with its sub-committees etc.

The *Instrument of Government* of every Church of England School contains a common Ethos Statement:

Recognising its historic foundation, the school will preserve and develop its religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England and in partnership with the Church at parish and diocesan level.

The school aims to serve its community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers to all its pupils.

NB: Some schools may have added to this wording slightly.

The school should also have a *Trust Deed* (though some have been lost in the mists of time) which describes the foundation character of the school.

It is the particular responsibility of Foundation Governors to uphold the foundation character and ethos of the school as set out in the Trust Deed and Instrument of Government.

Foundation Governors would normally be practising Christians and regular and supporting members of the local Anglican church¹. It may be appropriate for the total number of Foundation Governors to reflect an ecumenical dimension and to include members in good standing of other local churches. It may also be helpful for a school sometimes to recruit Foundation Governors from a wider area, perhaps to ensure a wider perspective or range of skills. A measure of local discretion is appropriate.

The local church (PCC) or a Trust may appoint some foundation governors. The Diocesan Board of Education appoints others after local consultation. The school has an Instrument of Government that sets out how many Foundation Governors the school has and by whom they are appointed.

In **Voluntary Controlled Schools** no single group of governors is in the majority.

¹ This really is a matter for local discretion, but "going to church" and "not being a notorious evil liver" would seem to be acceptable proxy indicators.

In **Voluntary Aided Schools** the governing body contains an overall majority of two Foundation Governors. At least one-fifth of Foundation Governors should be eligible for election or appointment as parent governors².

Foundation Governors generally serve a term of office of four years (but are free to resign at any stage within that period).

Foundation Governors should be prepared to present the views of the Diocesan Board of Education to the governing body³.

Diocesan education officers offer regular opportunities for governor training in church school issues. It is essential that governors undertake regular training during their term of office to enable them to keep up to date with the roles and responsibilities of being a governor and ever changing educational legislation and opportunities.

Foundation Governors are called to be "critical friends" of the school. Like all Governors they should be prepared to get to know the school and its concerns thoroughly and work with the head teacher and others in the provision of high academic standards through effective management. The appointment and contribution of keen and committed Foundation Governors is one way in which the Church shows its commitment to church schools and makes a very substantial contribution to the education of young people in a parish. Becoming a Foundation Governor is

² Since September 2003, the definition of a "parent" is that of a parent or carer of a child registered at the school, of a former pupil of the school, or of a child of or under compulsory school age.

³ The wording here is important: it does not demand *carte blanche* acceptance of the Board's views, but simply that such views will be made known if requested.

seen to be a significant Christian lay ministry. Deaneries, PCCs and the local churches have a vital role in recruiting, encouraging and supporting Foundation Governors.

The whole governing body has a responsibility to ensure that the instruments are upheld, and a school can only lose its religious character by closing. However, it is the particular responsibility of the foundation governors to see that the school's Church of England basis has a relevant and meaningful role in the daily running of the school, so that the school community is distinctively Christian.

They need to ensure that the school's policies, procedures, custom and practice are founded in Christian values and that all members of the school community are valued. Relationships between governors and staff are very important in this context.

In creating this special community it is essential that a school has good links with the local parish church and diocese. It is important that the church sees its local school as part of its mission, and is willing and keen to be involved. This is the key role of the foundation governor.

What features would make a good church school?

A church school should serve the whole local community, as it attempts to provide excellence in education for all, within a happy and safe environment. In addition it should nurture those who come from Christian homes within a faith context. This means that the Christian faith should be visible throughout the life of the school. The school is aiming to develop a community based on Christian values that does not force its beliefs on others. It should offer places to local families, including Christians, but also those of different faiths or none. This balance between being inclusive and being distinctively Christian should be reflected in the school's admissions policy.

Central to a strong and distinctive Christian character within the community is the provision of

good quality collective worship and religious education. While all schools should hold daily acts of worship and teach RE, these take on a special significance in a church school. The daily act of worship provides an opportunity for the whole community to come together to celebrate their Christian foundations. They can show that every child really does matter just as every person mattered to Jesus, and that the Christian faith is still relevant and meaningful to modern life, even when some of those present are from other faiths or none.

The distinctive Christian Character of a church school is monitored through the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS).

It asks four questions, which summarise the extra distinctive areas a church school is trying to achieve. These are:

- How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all learners?
- What is the impact of collective worship on the school community?
- How effective is Religious Education? (Only in aided schools)
- How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a Church school?

What is the Foundation Governor role in this?

Foundation governors should be involved in all aspects of school life, not being afraid to offer a Christian viewpoint within any discussion. They need to constantly ask the question 'Would a visitor see that this is a Christian school?' For this reason it is helpful if, when possible, foundation governors are represented on each sub-committee as well as any appointment panels.

Foundation governors have a special responsibility for Collective Worship and Religious Education. In discussions about the school's priorities they can argue for adequate resources and ensure that

these areas are included in the school's development plan. They can help to fulfil this role by acting as link governor for RE or Collective Worship.

Foundation Governors should also try to ensure that Collective Worship is taking place according to the Anglican tradition. They need to know what takes place within the collective worship in the school, so they should be willing to attend occasionally, and then talk informally to staff and children to gauge the impact of the worship.

Foundation Governors should play an active part in supporting the head teacher in working with the SIAMS framework and completing or updating the school's Self Evaluation Form. When inspections take place foundation governors will be interviewed to ensure that they are fulfilling their role as a 'Christian critical friend'.

Who can be a School Governor?

No special qualifications are needed to become a school governor.

However, if you take on this role, you will need to be interested in the work of schools, their teachers and pupils. You should also have enthusiasm for education processes.

Governors can be:

- Parents - elected by parents with children on the school roll;
- Members of staff - elected by staff at the school;
- Appointees of the Local Authority;
- Appointees of an organisation or foundation, such as the Church;
- Co-opted governors; these are appointed by the Governing Body and are people who, in the opinion of the governing body, have the skills required to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school.

The way in which governors are appointed or elected varies with each category. However, once appointed, all governors have the same rights, powers and responsibilities and unless otherwise stated at the time of appointment, serve for a period of four years.

What do School Governors do?

The Governing Body has three core functions. They are:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- Holding the head teacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent

AND they ensure that Safeguarding is EFFECTIVE

School governors come from a variety of backgrounds. They are not expected to be experts in educational matters. That's the responsibility of the head teacher and the teaching staff of the school. The head teacher is responsible for the organisation and management within the school.

As a school governor you are expected to:

- Work as a member of the governing body for the best interests of the school;
- Attend the regular meetings and special meetings of the governing body;
- Serve on committees which deal with the governing body's legal obligations;

such as:

- Finance
- Curriculum
- Pay Committee
- Health & Safety
- Performance Management
- Appeals
- Admissions
- Premises
- Personnel

- Become familiar with general educational issues and developments;
- Take an interest in school activities;
- Promote the school within the local community;
- Commit time to the duties and responsibilities of a governor;
- Commit to undertake training offered by the Diocese and Local authority.

Governors' legal responsibilities are wide and varied but they do have some statutory duties.

Broadly these are:

- deciding (with the Head, staff and LA) the aims and policies of the School and how standards of education can be improved
- deciding the conduct of the School - that is, how in general terms it should run. The head teacher is responsible for day to day control and management
- helping to draw up (with the Head and Staff) the School Development Plan
- deciding how to spend the School's budget
- making sure that the religious education and National Curriculum are taught
- reporting on National Curriculum assessments and examination results
- selecting the Head and Deputy Head
- supporting the head teacher in appointing, promoting and disciplining other staff
- providing a link between the school and local community
- drawing up an action plan after an inspection and monitoring how the plan is put into practice

The appointment of Foundation Governors

The School's Instrument of Government details 'how many' Foundation Governors a governing body should have. This important document is to be found in school and a copy should be in the keeping of the Clerk to the Governors.

The head teacher is a Staff Governor unless he/she chooses not to be and informs the Clerk to the Governors of this choice in writing. The head teacher's place on the Governing Body must be kept open for him/her and can not be allocated to anyone else.

The Incumbent, Local Minister, Priest in Charge or the Principal Officiating Minister is likely to be the Ex-officio Foundation Governor, and counts as one of the Foundation Governors. In cases where there is no Ex-Officio Foundation Governor, and the possibility of there not being one for some time, or where the incumbent or Local minister has more than one church school within his/her jurisdiction, it is within the remit of the appropriate Archdeacon to appoint a replacement, who is known as a temporary ex-officio governor. If the governors would like to explore this possibility because of exceptional circumstances they should write to the Diocesan Education Office (Director of Education). The Archdeacon also has the right to request that the Governing Body remove the Ex-Officio Foundation Governor from office.

The appointing body for foundation governors is contained in the Instrument of Government of each school. In the majority of cases the Diocesan Board of Education is the appointing body in consultation with the specified Parochial Church Council (PCC) which is asked to nominate individuals. In a small number of cases the PCC is the appointing body. In each of these situations the PCC will be required to seek the completion of an appointment form by the proposed foundation governor.

The Procedure for Appointment and Re-appointment of Foundation Governors

1. The PCC Secretary (or the Clerk to the Governors) notifies the Diocesan Education Office when there is a Foundation Governor vacancy at the school and requests a Foundation Governor Application Form. At certain times reminder letters may send out to the PCC

Secretary and Clerks to Governors advising of Foundation Governors who are due to come to the end of their term of office, enclosing Application forms and requesting that the PCC put the nomination process into operation.

2. Each nominee, whether they seek re-appointment or are new, must complete a Foundation Governor Application Form. If this is a nomination for re-appointment the section requesting details of training undertaken in the last 4 years must be completed. The nominee must complete the Declarations on the Application Form, and agree to a Disclosure and Barring Service check for the protection of children and young persons to be undertaken by the school. The form must also be completed on behalf of the PCC by way of signature of endorsement from the Principal Officiating Minister. If this is a new nomination please indicate the name of the retiring Foundation Governor wherever possible. The nominee is required to provide the names and addresses, including an email address, of two referees, who should be independent of the counter signatory. If the nominee is seeking reappointment then the referees should be the chair of governors and the head teacher of the school.
3. A skills audit of the governing body is essential in indicating any additional knowledge, skills and experience that would be beneficial to the governance of the school. PCCs should liaise with schools before making a nomination to ascertain the skills required by the school.
4. The completed Application Form is returned to the Diocesan Education Office (Governors):
by post to: 103 Newport, Lincoln. LN1 3EE;
by email to: governors@lincoln.anglican.org
5. The Diocesan Board of Education will consider the Application Forms and received references and approve or otherwise the appointment. The Diocesan Board of Education will receive a list of appointed foundation governors and formally ratify appointments at its regular meetings.
6. Records held at the Diocese and Local Authorities are updated.

Support for the work of Governors

The Diocesan Board of Education comprises a well-qualified and experienced team of advisers and assistants who are there to support all who work with children within schools and colleges. In the first instance, please contact:

Deputy Director of Education: Paul Thompson

Email: paul.thompson@lincoln.anglican.org.

Diocesan Office (Governors) Mrs Tracy Smith

Email: governors@lincoln.anglican.org

As part of its regular training programme, and in association with our local authority partners, the Diocesan Board of Education offers courses for foundation governors.

Please see our current training programme for details.

This is also displayed on the diocesan website: www.lincolndiocesaneducation.com

or contact Patricia Dixon education.events@lincoln.anglican.org

The Diocesan Vision for Education

**Church schools serving their communities through excellence,
exploration and encouragement within the love of God.**

The Diocese of Lincoln is called to faithful worship, confident discipleship and joyful service and our church schools bear witness to our belief that every child is made in the image of God and loved by Him. They were founded for the good of their local communities so that children can be educated through the values and stories of Christianity.

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