



DIOCESE OF  
LINCOLN

BOARD OF  
EDUCATION

⊕ THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

Questions that newly appointed  
foundation and ex-officio governors  
might ask . . . with answers

October 2015

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## **1. What information should I receive from my school?**

As a bare minimum you should receive a copy of the “Governors’ Handbook”. This can be down loaded from the Department for Education website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/governors-handbook--3](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governors-handbook--3).

You should also expect to receive:

- a copy of your Instrument of Government;
- a list of your fellow governors;
- a list of the staff who work at the school with details of their responsibilities;
- the school prospectus;
- the School Development Plan;
- copies of the last OfSTED Inspection and Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools (SIAMS) reports, and possibly information on the school’s Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) and a copy of the last Head Teachers Report to governors.

You should also receive copies of the minutes of the last two governors meetings so that you may familiarise yourself with the business currently being dealt with.

Many schools have their own induction packages for governors that hold all the above items and much more.

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## **2. What are my responsibilities?**

Your responsibilities as a school governor are laid out in some detail in the “Governors’ Handbook” but in essence governors hold an overview of the life and work of the school. Governors also have a duty to promote high standards for the pupils: "To do the best you can, with the resources available, for the benefits of the pupils in the school". Governors do not get involved in the day to day running of the school, which is the role of the head teacher, but fulfil a strategic role, become a critical friend and provide accountability. Governors have no individual power as all responsibilities and decisions are shared collectively.

The governors are a corporate body.

## **3. Do I have extra responsibilities as a Foundation Governor?**

As a Foundation Governor your responsibilities are no more than those of your fellow governors. However “If the school has a religious character the foundation governors must preserve and develop this. They must also ensure compliance with the trust deed, if there is one.” This responsibility can 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.

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**4. 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 3 meetings per school year, but many now meet 6 times. You may also be asked to join a committee, which will involve attendance at extra meetings. 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.

**5. 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 Governors but not essential. 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. In fact it is the practice in Lincoln Diocese to discourage the incumbent from taking on the role of Chair.

**6. I have just been appointed as the Chair, does this give me any more responsibilities or powers than my fellow governors?**

As Chair you have no more responsibilities or powers than your fellow governors. However the smooth running of the governing body falls largely on your shoulders as Chair. This involves the procedures and structures of your governing body. You might like to re-examine such items as the

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committee membership, structure and procedures, your meetings and associated paperwork, training etc. to establish if any changes need to be made to make the governing body more effective. As Chair you will develop a good working relationship with your Head teacher. This will probably require you to be available for additional meetings with the Head, for discussion and the signing of documents.

**7. Am I responsible for appointing the Foundation Governors at my school?**

In Lincoln Diocesan the Diocesan Board of Education appoints Foundation Governors following consultation with a Parochial Church Council or in a small number of cases the PCC is the appointing body. As the Incumbent it is your responsibility to work with the Parochial Church Council to find and nominate suitable people to the Board who are willing to become Foundation Governors. All nominees, whether new or continuing, must complete and submit a Foundation Governor Application Form, which is available from the Diocesan Education Department or downloaded from the Education pages of the Diocesan website.

**8. 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?<sup>1</sup>**

It is the responsibility of the Archdeacon to appoint a replacement or

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<sup>1</sup> Relevant to ex-officio appointments

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substitute Ex-officio Foundation Governor at a school. Initially therefore this situation needs to be brought to the Archdeacon's attention, via the Diocesan Advisor to Governors. It is acceptable for the Incumbent or the school to suggest a suitable person to the Archdeacon who is willing to fulfil this role.

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

**9. Am I expected to spend more time in school than my fellow governors because I am the Incumbent?<sup>2</sup>**

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 head teacher.

**10. Is it appropriate for me to develop a good relationship with my head teacher?**

It is both appropriate and good practice to develop a good relationship with your head teacher 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 3.

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**11. 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.

**12. My school has a Bishop's Visitor. What is the role of this person?**

Bishop's Visitors fulfil a pastoral role on behalf of the Bishop in church schools; they are instrumental in delivering the Bishop's termly letter to the pupils in a school. Bishop's Visitors have a potentially crucial part to play in strengthening partnerships and building positive interaction between Church and School. This part of the role of a Bishop's Visitor is additional to that which is provided through the parish priest or other members of the local Church congregation. Bishop's Visitors come to schools as individuals with their own set of skills, experiences and enthusiasms. This enables them to work out, in partnership with the school, their unique role and relationship in that context. They may also alert the Education Team of any situation or problems with which the Team may be able to give additional help and support.

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

Governors of Aided schools have a 10% liability for building works at the school and therefore are likely to obtain their funding for this from a number of sources to pay the contributions to the Diocese. These include PCC contributions, trust funds, income from the hire of the school premises, PTA contributions, and of course fund raising. It is advisable for governors to set up an account for their voluntary funds. Voluntary Controlled schools have no financial assistance from PCC's and the costs of running the school are the responsibility of the Local Authority (LA).

**14. 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 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. Although Trustees could refuse proposals by the Governors or the LA, they would do so with great caution and always endeavour to find a compromise. 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



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problem 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 Government Education Department and Charity Commission.

**15. What support is available to me from the Diocese in my role as: -  
a) a new governor?  
b) a new trustee?**

a) The Diocesan Education Centre is available to help and support. This is provided by telephone, by visits to attend governors meetings and by training sessions, both centrally and at your own school. The Diocesan Advisor to Governors has a particular responsibility to support and train foundation governors.

b) The Diocesan Director is available to help and support Trustees in their responsibilities. Help is provided by telephone, by visits to attend Trustees meetings and if required consulting on behalf of the Trustees with our Solicitors and the National Society.

**16. Will I need to undergo a DBS check?**

The Government has removed the automatic need for Governors, as volunteers, to undergo a DBS check. The Diocesan Board of Education has expressed the view that all governors should be checked as there will be times when they will be with children both in the school and perhaps also in

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the community. The final decision rest with the governing body and the head teacher.

**17. What committees of the governing body would I expect to be asked to support?**

Each school governing body will have its own committee structure. As a general rule most schools will have committees which cover these areas of school life:

- Finance
- Curriculum
- Education standards
- Premises / resources and
- Personnel.

**18. How many people are on the Governing Body and whom do they represent?**

The number of governors on a school governing body is stated in the Instrument of Governance. In an Aided school the number of foundation governors must exceed the total of all categories by 2, thereby having an overall majority on the governing body.

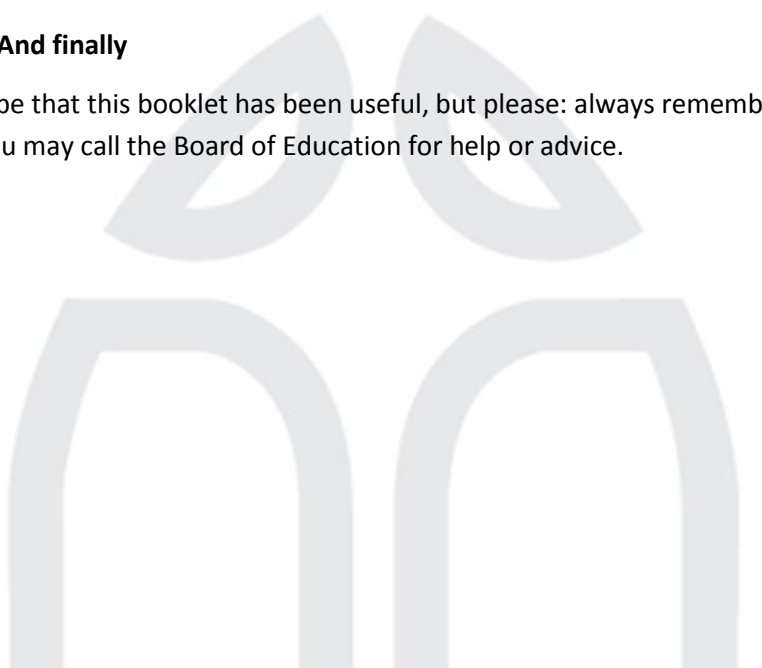
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The 2012 Governance Regulations (updated 2014) state that a governing body will have the following groups of governors:

Elected parents	minimum 2
Local Authority	1
Elected Staff	1
Head teacher	1
Foundation	minimum 2 for VC; minimum 7 for VA
Co-opted	this number is determined by the governing body at the implementation of the 2012/2014 regulations.

### **And finally**

We hope that this booklet has been useful, but please: always remember that you may call the Board of Education for help or advice.



# 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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