



GOVERNANCE GUIDANCE

EX-OFFICIO FOUNDATION GOVERNORS

Introduction

- 1. Principles of Public Life**
- 2. Role of a governor and of a foundation governor**
- 3. Ex-officio role**
- 4. Growing Faith**

Introduction - The importance of governors

Our vision is to promote educational excellence everywhere for everyone, reflecting and delivering the key messages described in the *Church of England Vision for Education; Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good (GS 2039); July 2016*.

The school vision has life in all its fullness (John 10:10) at its heart, embracing the spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, moral and social development of children and young people equipping pupils and teachers with the capacity to wrestle with the big questions of meaning such as ‘Who am I?’, ‘Why am I here?’, ‘What do I desire?’ and ‘How then shall I live?’. It is about ‘educating the whole person’ - what the 1988 Education Reform Act sees as physical and intellectual development united with spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

In short, our aim is to secure transformational outcomes for young people by combining academic rigour with a rounded approach to personal development.

The governing body is a vital part of the leadership of any school and Ofsted is increasing its focus on inspecting the quality of governance in schools. The governing body role in developing diocesan schools as church schools is also scrutinised during the Section 48 Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) process.

One of the key strands of a SIAMS inspection is Vision and Leadership, which feeds into the single inspection question of “How effective is the school’s distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels in enabling pupils and adults to flourish? Hence, governors should have a detailed, strategic knowledge of their school and how its distinctive Christian vision permeates the operational functions, led by the headteacher.

It follows that governors, the headteacher and staff should work together to realise the shared Christian vision for the school community.

I - Principles of public life

All governors should follow the [7 principles of public life](#) published by the Committee on Standards in Public Life and based upon the 'Nolan' principles (gov.uk 31 May 1995)

1. Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

2. Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

3. Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

4. Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

5. Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

6. Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

7. Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

2 - The role of a governor and the role of a foundation governor

The role of a governor¹ is to contribute to the work of the governing board in ensuring high standards of achievement for all children and young people in the school by:

- setting the school's vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils;
- overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

As part of the governing board team, **all governors** are expected to:

1) Contribute to the strategic discussions at governing board meetings which determine:

- the vision and ethos of the school;
- clear and ambitious strategic priorities and targets for the school;
- that all children, including those with special educational needs, have access to a broad and balanced curriculum;
- the school's budget, including the expenditure of the pupil premium allocation;
- the school's staffing structure and key staffing policies;
- the principles to be used by school leaders to set other school policies.

2) Hold the senior leaders to account by monitoring the school's performance; this includes:

- agreeing the outcomes from the school's self-evaluation and ensuring they are used to inform the priorities in the school development plan;
- considering all relevant data and feedback provided on request by school leaders and external sources on all aspects of school performance;
- asking challenging questions of school leaders;
- ensuring senior leaders have arranged for the required audits to be carried out and receiving the results of those audits;
- ensuring senior leaders have developed the required policies and procedures and the school is operating effectively according to those policies;
- acting as a link governor on a specific issue, making relevant enquiries of the relevant staff, and reporting to the governing board on the progress on the relevant school priority;
- listening to and reporting to the school's stakeholders: pupils, parents, staff, and the wider community, including local employers.

¹ <https://www.nga.org.uk/getmedia/e1d09ad8-281b-40f9-bbb4-576ea4aa475a/Governor-RD.pdf> Governor Role Description - NGA – Welcome to Governance 10th Edition

3) Ensure the school staff have the resources and support they require to do their jobs well, including the necessary expertise on business management, external advice where necessary, effective appraisal and CPD (continuing professional development), suitable premises, and that the way in which the resources are used has a positive impact.

4) When required, serve on panels of governors to:

- appoint the headteacher and other senior leaders;
- appraise the headteacher;
- set the headteacher's pay and agree the pay recommendations for other staff;
- hear the second stage of staff grievances and disciplinary matters;
- hear appeals about pupil exclusions.

In order to perform this role well, a governor is expected to:

- get to know the school, including visiting the school occasionally during school hours and gaining a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses;
- attend induction training and regular relevant training and development events;
- attend meetings (full governing board meetings and committee meetings) and read all the papers before the meeting;
- act in the best interests of all the pupils of the school;
- behave in a professional manner, as set down in the governing board's code of conduct, including acting in strict confidence.

Foundation governors also play a core role in ensuring that a church school's deeply Christian character, serving those of all faiths and none, is well understood and promoted. This responsibility is carried by all governors in a church school and includes:

- preserving the links between church, school and diocese;
- ensuring that diocesan education policy is upheld and promoted;
- ensuring that suitable training for foundation governors is accessed on a regular basis;
- ensuring that collective worship and religious education (RE) at the school are appropriately monitored;
- ensuring that collective worship and religious education at the school follow the appropriate guidelines and/or syllabus;
- keeping abreast of changes to the RE Statement for Entitlement or the Agreed Syllabus for RE in the Local Authority in which the school is situated;
- bringing to the attention of the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) any matters requiring external support regarding the school;
- ensuring that the deeply Christian vision of the school is embedded and promoted throughout its community and is reflected in its policies and protocols, curriculum, activities and relationships;
- ensuring that their own attitudes and behaviour in relation to the school, its staff and the wider community reflect distinctive Christian values;
- taking an active role in the SIAMS process.

3 – The ex-officio foundation governor role

As with all governors, foundation governors are responsible for strategic oversight of the school including ensuring best use of public funds, holding the Head Teacher to account for educational standards and ensuring clarity of vision and ethos. In particular, foundation governors should also ensure that the school is run in line with its historic trust as a Church school, ensuring that religious education and collective worship take place. These responsibilities are especially monitored through Section 48 SIAMS inspections (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools).

1) Key roles and functions

By virtue of being the parish priest, the ex-officio governor has a key role in the following areas (note that for some of these areas the parish priest will need support and involvement from other members of the parish community):

- Developing the Diocese of Ely's Church-School Covenant. This means setting down how the school and church will work together in the community as a whole, not just via the governing body. This will be a key document for developing the parish's relationship with its school, helping both groups move towards a fuller understanding of how church and school can form a powerful Christian partnership;
- Leading acts of worship for the school and supporting the monitoring of the impact of collective worship upon staff and pupils;
- Monitoring and supporting the school's distinctive Christian ethos;
- Ensuring that the curriculum for Religious Education meets statutory expectations with regard to the RE Statement of Entitlement, any locally agreed syllabi and diocesan expectations;
- Opening each meeting of the Governing Body with prayer, this sets the tone for the meeting and reminds all participants of the Christian ethos of the school;
- Endeavouring to build a positive relationship with the Head Teacher. This is vital to the school's development as a Christian community and supporting the Head Teacher in leading a Church of England school;
- Supporting governors, staff and pupils pastorally.

2) Additional considerations

The ex-officio role is a time-consuming role but a vital one, as the school should be at the centre of the Church's mission (Dearing Review). However, ex-officio Governors should also consider the following:

- Becoming Chair of Governors is very time-consuming. It could also be viewed as in conflict with the role of pastoral support in the school. The Diocese of Ely Board of Education strongly discourages ex-officio clergy to take up the role of Chair of the Governing Body.

- Avoid sitting on more than one governing body if possible. The Diocese of Ely Board of Education acknowledges that this can often be challenging where you have more than one school (both church and community) within your benefice. In this instance, it is recommended to liaise with the Diocesan Education Team and the Governing Bodies regarding which school would most benefit from your expertise and pastoral support.
- It is important that any vacant ex-officio places on Church school governing bodies are filled by a substitute governor, who is an Archdeacon's appointment. This is to ensure that a school is never left unsupported. It may be possible for clergy in ministry teams to share ex-officio duties where possible. Where an ex-officio post becomes vacant, the Diocese of Ely Board of Education requests that you contact the Senior Officer for SIAMS, RE & Governance to suggest a possible substitute Governor for the school to cover the interregnum. This could be a Team Ministry Member, Rural Dean, ALM, LLM, Lay Minister or other member of the parish, whom you believe to be capable of fulfilling the ex-officio role during the vacancy.
- Governors' meetings and committees, could amount to at least one hour per week in term time. To be a full and effective governor the ex-officio needs to commit to relevant committees, including the committee for Foundation Governors.

3) Pastoral care

There are areas where the ex-officio governor would be expected to be involved as a result of the pastoral side of their role:

- As a member of any appeals or grievance panel, where pastoral support will be a strength.
- Senior staff appointments. The appointment of a new Headteacher or member of the Senior Leadership Team will be a time of particular importance for the future of the school and the links between school and parish.
- Areas where pastoral support is unexpectedly required in school e.g. bereavement; personal crisis; controversy; accident; celebration.
- Planning a clear pattern of visits, perhaps based around times of leading collective worship, this could also include a chat with staff/ the Head and classroom visits so this is both pastoral and monitoring from a governance perspective
- Ensuring that the Head Teacher and fellow governors understand the importance of the priest's pastoral role as part of the parish commitment to the school
- Encouraging fellow foundation governors to visit and involve themselves with the school
- Engaging other members of the ministry team, and of other denominations, with school whilst retaining the unique identity of the parish and the school

4) Growing Faith

As ex-officio, there is a need to acknowledge and utilise the support of the Parish Community. This is made clear by the 'Growing Faith' Vision set by the House of Bishops:

- Growing Faith calls for a culture shift which will take time to be embedded. The vision is for every aspect of mission and ministry to be viewed through the lens of its implications for children, young people and households. It is a vision where children, young people and households are coming to faith, growing in discipleship and confidently contributing to the Kingdom of God through the community of faith. It is anticipated that Growing Faith will work with and alongside Setting God's People Free, particularly in seeking to see the people of God confidently living out their faith in homes and schools.
- The partnership between churches, schools and households is crucial in this. It should be evident in the structures of each diocese, and form a central strand of every parish, deanery or diocesan mission action plan, reflecting the unique makeup of each diocese, and the particularities of each parish and deanery. Therefore, although the underlying principles of Growing Faith remain the same, the outworking will look different within each diocese.
- Consideration should be made to Growing Faith when setting up the Diocese of Ely Church-School Covenant with the school.

For further information and support, please contact:

Caroline Vinal
Senior Officer for SIAMS, RE and Governance
Diocese of Ely Education Directorate

E: caroline.vinal@elydiocese.org
T: 01353 652724
M: 07538 099289