

## **The Roles and Responsibilities of Church School Foundation Governors September 2021**

This document is issued by the Hereford Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) to advise people who are considering becoming Foundation Governors on the Full Governing Body (FGB) of a maintained (VA or VC Church School).

### **Introduction**

School Governors form the largest voluntary body in the UK. The importance of effective Christian governors in our church schools cannot be underestimated. The duties of a Church of England Foundation Governor are wide ranging and, in addition to having the responsibilities of other governors, they are the formal Christian presence and link between school and church.

Foundation Governors have a responsibility to ensure the preservation and development of the religious foundation of the school. This means ensuring that the church school is a place with a distinctive character where the Christian faith is alive and practised.

We believe in the Diocese of Hereford that within our Church Community there are people who have valuable skills to offer. One of the skills any church school Governing Body needs is to understand the Christian character of the school and to safeguard its foundation.

A Church of England school's Governing Body is responsible for clarity of vision and strategic direction, ensuring that the school has identified what its Christian ethos means.

Being a Governor is:

- A great opportunity
- A considerable responsibility
- A huge privilege

### **Expectations of Governors**

Foundation Governors are expected to act in the best interests of the school, following the guidance given below.

The role of the Foundation Governor includes the same duties as other Governing Body members. These can be summarised as a general responsibility for the conduct of the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement, by setting the strategic direction of the school, ensuring accountability, and monitoring and evaluating school performance – in essence to:

- be a regularly attending member of the Full Governing Body and willing to serve on committees. Where some meetings may be held virtually to support modern practices and encourage a more diverse governor community.
- conduct all school related business in a professional manner and in line with the school, and DBE codes of conduct
- act as a "critical friend" offering support and appropriate challenge to the Headteacher and school leaders
- be both supportive and challenging the work of the school and the staff within it

- adopt policies to achieve aims and objectives of the school
- have time to visit the school and get to know staff and children
- preserve, develop and safeguard the Christian Ethos and religious character of the school and uphold the principles of the Trust Deed
- understand and consider the issues facing the school without bias
- observe confidentiality and act professionally with integrity, objectivity and honesty

The FGB may identify specific skills, (such as financial or personnel management ability) which they are currently lacking and need to address through new appointments. A skills audit is helpful in showing any additional knowledge, skills and experience that would be beneficial.

Governance is about more than attending meetings – governors need to be able to dedicate enough time to get to know the school and its staff, along with taking up appropriate training opportunities on appointment and as they arise through their term of office. Many are asked to take an overview of a specific curriculum area, year group or key stage and make reports to the Full Governing Body.

The responsibility of the Full Governing Body is collective. Governors do not have the authority to act individually, unless instructed by the whole governing body. All governors have equal rights and responsibilities, and are not expected to be 'experts'. However, each governor will bring to bear their own skills and experience of life on the many issues presented to them.

### **Additional Expectations of Foundation Governors**

In addition to their generic role as governors, foundation governors should undertake the following activities:

- be committed to the Christian pastoral support and wellbeing of the school community
- ensure that the School Development Plan includes strategy for the development areas in respect of the school's church school status
- be prepared to offer challenge and support to the school and parish as they strengthen their links
- ensure the school is regularly promoted in the parish magazine/newsletter
- undertake appropriate training e.g. Diocesan training for foundation governors
- if being nominated by the Parochial Church Council (PCC), report back to the PCC regularly on the work of the school with particular regard to the development of its Christian foundation

Foundation Governors should play an active part in supporting the Headteacher in evaluating the school as a Church school. When SIAMS inspections take place foundation governors will be interviewed to ensure that they are fulfilling their role as a 'critical friend', committed to safeguarding the Christian Ethos of the school.

### **Foundation Governors should be familiar with two important legal documents:**

#### **1. The Instrument of Government**

This sets out the composition of the school's Governing Body. The Clerk and the Diocesan Department for Education will have copies. It includes an ethos statement, recommended by the National Society and adopted by the majority of C of E schools.

#### **2. The Trust Deed**

This sets out the founder's intentions. The school should be able to provide a copy of this.

*All applications for Foundation Governors are scrutinised and approved by the DBE. Please refer to the Hereford Diocesan Board of Education Policy for Foundation Governors in VA and VC Schools June 2021.*