

## So you have a vacancy for a Foundation Governor? What next?

At the Diocesan Education Team we are regularly asked if we can supply a foundation governor when a vacancy arises. We are sorry to say that we don't hold a list of prospective governors as useful as that might be.

If you have a vacancy for a foundation governor here are the steps you should take and some suggestions for recruiting volunteers. These tips can also be applied to other governor vacancies.

1. Your first step is to ensure that a skills analysis has taken place so that you are searching for a governor with the right skill set, whether that be educational knowledge, finance or HR for example. It isn't sufficient to just search for someone with a Christian commitment, as useful as that may be. We also advise that you take the diversity of the board into account. Have you discussed the diversity of the board and agreed a plan to increase diversity? Vacancies are always an opportunity.
2. Your second step is to check with your Instrument of Government to see if the vacancy is for a foundation governor appointed by the PCC or by the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE). If it is a PCC appointment then the application needs to be approved by the PCC and their involvement will be important. For DBE appointments we take each application on merit, a candidate with a Christian commitment is preferred but occasionally appointments are approved from applicants that can demonstrate they are committed to working to enhancing and preserving the distinctiveness of the school.

### Searching for Volunteers

- Use Inspiring Governance <https://www.inspiringgovernance.org/> or Governors for Schools <https://governorsforschools.org.uk/schools/how-we-work/>
- Make contact with your local minister, church or PCC. Can they nominate someone with the appropriate skills? If you are in a Federation or MAT you can approach every parish and not just those associated with your school directly.
- You can approach all ecumenical churches in your area. A Foundation Governor can come from another Christian denomination. Contact other parishes and mission communities; if you are close to a county border we can help with details of those in other counties and Dioceses.
- Be as proactive as you might with staff recruitment. Approaching local businesses can work. Companies encourage staff to volunteer and they may be able to fill skills gaps. For example, if you had a need for financial knowledge you could write directly to finance departments, accountancy firms and local businesses asking for a volunteer committed to church school education. It is estimated around 15 million people in the country attended a church school.
- Contact other schools/church schools. They may have a Governor who could also serve on your Governing Board. Or they may have a future school leader for whom being part of a governing board might be a great development opportunity.
- Explore your parent body. Have you had any parent elections recently? If you have, people who weren't elected might be willing to be a Foundation Governor.
- Ask current members of staff and governors whether they know of anyone who might be interested in becoming a governor.
- Ask regular visitors to the school, such as parent helpers, community police officers, whether they would be interested in becoming school governors, or if they know anyone who might.

- When the school holds public events, such as parents' evenings, open evenings, sports days, public Performances of music or drama or presentation evenings, ensure that recruitment leaflets and posters are displayed in a prominent place and draw visitors' attention to them.
- Ensure that your school newsletter and website have a section advertising current and forthcoming vacancies.
- Compile a list of local parish, trade and resident association magazines and newsletters and ask whether you could use them to advertise governor vacancies.
- Ask local charities for nominations.
- Make use of all local public venues: ask your local church, library, doctors' and dentists' surgeries, community centre and hospital if they would be willing to display governor recruitment posters and leaflets.
- If you have feeder schools or preschools make contact with them and put together an advertisement. A child's transition from one school to another is an ideal time for parents to become involved.
- Social media is also an excellent way to grab people's attention. Please remember to adhere to your school's policy on the use of social media.
- Hold a recruitment afternoon or evening – an informal event with refreshments to which parents and/or members of the local community are invited to chat with the Headteacher, Chair of Governors and perhaps one or two other governors about the role of school governor.

You can use all of the approaches above at the same time, it is better to have a choice if possible. Obviously you won't just accept the first candidate that comes along. Most boards hold informal interviews not only to assess the suitability of the candidate but also to share the realities of the role with the prospective governor. Follow safeguarding procedures, safer recruitment processes are relevant to volunteers too.

When you have identified a suitable candidate, they must complete an application form. You can get one of these by emailing [info.ed@leeds.anglican.org](mailto:info.ed@leeds.anglican.org).

