Information for Prospective School Governors

Becoming a School Governor

Each school has a governing body which comprises members of the local community, parents, teachers, staff and representatives of the Local Authority (LA). Additional stakeholders may also be represented for some categories of school, eg, the governing bodies of schools with a religious character also include governors appointed by the diocese.

The governing body works with the Headteacher, school staff, LA, EAS, parents and, where appropriate, the diocese. It is a corporate body and no individual governor has power to act alone (except the chairman in an emergency). However, all governors have the opportunity to use or develop their skills in finance, personnel, committee work and communication.

How do Governing Bodies work?

A governing body

- works with the Headteacher to set the strategic direction of the school
- is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance against set targets
- makes decisions collectively as a team
- is legally required to meet at least once a term - many will meet twice
- will have a committee structure enabling issues to be discussed in detail before recommendations are put to the full governing body, some matters will also be delegated to a committee

A vital part of the role of school governors is providing effective support and challenge for Headteachers and senior leaders. An effective governing body is vital to ensure schools continue to serve pupils well with the aim of raising standards. To support new governors in carrying out this role, mandatory training was introduced under the **Government of Maintained Schools (Training Requirements for Governors) (Wales) Regulations 2013.** EAS Governor Support provides the following mandatory training at no cost to the individual:

- **Induction training for governors**
  The induction training for newly appointed or elected governors focuses on their role and responsibilities and will give new governors the encouragement and confidence to be able to take a full and active part in governing body decision making.
- **Understanding school performance data**
  The training on school performance data will help governors understand what the school data means for their school, how their school compares with others and identify the action that needs to be taken to improve performance. An understanding of school data gives governors confidence to take part in governing body discussions on school performance and to ask appropriate and searching questions.

Governor Responsibilities

Although Headteachers are responsible for the day to day management of the school, they will be implementing policies set by the governing body. The responsibilities include:

- Agreeing the aims and values of the school
- Drawing up and reviewing the School Development Plan
- Adopting and reviewing school policies
- Appointing staff
- Ensuring the National Curriculum is taught
- Ensuring needs of individual pupils are met, including special needs
- Ensuring pupil Wellbeing and Safeguarding
- Preparing and circulating the Annual Report to Parents
- Agreeing and monitoring the school budget.

What qualities do you need to be a School Governor?

- A desire to improve children's educational attainment
- Time to spare to prepare for and attend meetings
- A willingness to learn and ask questions
- A commitment to attend training
- The capacity to work as part of a team and appreciate the views and contribution of others
- The ability to respect confidentiality

Most governing bodies have a schedule of meetings for the year including meetings of sub-committees. You may be asked to attend unscheduled meetings at short notice if a decision is urgently required, but you will always be provided with notice of all meetings.

You are entitled to reasonable unpaid time off work for your duties as a school governor. Some employers allow paid leave which you should confirm prior to nomination and appointment.

In order to fulfill your role as a governor you need to learn about your school. This can be done in a number of ways:

- Familiarising yourself with school performance data
- Visiting school, by prior arrangement, during session time
- Attending events such as assemblies, sports day, fetes, etc. These can be an ideal opportunity to meet staff and see the school working in a less formal way
- Getting to know what issues are currently affecting the school by talking to other governors

Being a governor does not just mean attending a business meeting now and again in a deserted school! Having said that, business meetings are, of course, an essential part of school governance. You will discuss budgets, staffing matters, school policies, provision of services, health and safety, etc. You will also receive reports for consultation from the LA and EAS. Usually you will receive documentation in advance to give you time to prepare any questions you may have and contribute to discussion.

The idea of making important decisions need not be daunting. Professional advice is always available from the Headteacher and, if appropriate, officers of the LA and EAS will also attend meetings to discuss specific issues. The majority of school governing body meetings are clerked by the EAS.

If you think you have something to offer your local school – either professional expertise or an interest in education - you may wish to become one of the following categories of School Governor:
Parents/Teachers/Support Staff The Headteacher will inform all parents and staff when relevant vacancies arise. Nominations will be sought and, if necessary, an election held.
Community You should contact the Headteacher or to the EAS Governor Support Service to express an interest.
LA/Community Council/Foundation These appointments will be made by the relevant council or church body.

The role of the school governor is demanding but very rewarding and is a good way to give back to your local community.