

## TWO WATERS PRIMARY SCHOOL



**Everything you ever wanted to know about being a governor, but were afraid to ask.**

*This document has been created to answer some common questions about the role of a governor, what the governing body expect of you, what the LEA expect of a governing body, what we can do and more importantly what we cant.*

*If after reading this document you still have questions, feel free to call the school and someone will call back.*

# Who Can Become a School Governor?

Almost anyone over the age of 18 who is prepared to work constructively as part of a team can become a school governor. They should be people who:

- are willing to give the time and commitment to attend governing body meetings;
- want to get to know their school;
- read paperwork before attending governing body meetings;
- have common sense and personal integrity;
- are proactive and eager to learn;
- will LISTEN and are able to make fair and reasoned decisions;
- have the ability to respect confidentiality.

Schools need people from the local community to help them to raise standards for all our pupils.

A person who genuinely cares about the schools in their community can become a school governor.

There are some exceptions (see below).

School staff who are eligible for election as staff governors (i.e. who are paid to work at the school) are not eligible to serve as LEA governors or community governors at their school.

## Disqualifications from Governorship

A governor must be aged 18 or over at the time of their election or appointment.

*A person is disqualified from being a governor if they:*

- have failed to attend the governing body meetings for a continuous period of six months, beginning with the date of the first meeting they failed to attend, without the consent of the governing body. This provision does not apply to the headteacher;
- have a mental disorder and have been detained under the Mental Health Act 1983;
- are bankrupt;
- are subject to a disqualification order under the company Directors Disqualification Act 1986 or to an order made under Section 429(2) of the Insolvency Act 1986;
- have been removed from the office of charity trustee or trustee for a charity by the Charity Commissioners or High Court on grounds of any misconduct or mismanagement, or under Section 7 of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990 from being concerned in the management or control of any body;
- are included in the list of teachers or workers prohibited or restricted from working with children or young people;
- are disqualified from working with children;
- are disqualified from being an independent school proprietor, teacher or employee by the Secretary of State;
- have been sentenced to 3 months or more in prison (without the option of a fine) in the 5 years before becoming a governor or since becoming a governor;
- have at any time received a prison sentence of 5 years or more;
- have been fined for causing a nuisance or disturbance on school premises during the 5 years prior to or since the appointment or election as a governor;
- refuse to an application being made to the Criminal Records Bureau for a criminal records certificate or have that application rejected.

A person is disqualified from appointment as a community governor if they are eligible to be a staff governor at the school, or if they are an elected member of the local authority to which the school belongs.

A person is disqualified from election or appointment as a parent governor of a school if they are an elected member of the local authority or if they work at the school for more than 500 hours in a school year.

### **Governor Clearance Arrangements**

All prospective governors should be aware that guidance from the DfES states that schools need to have procedures in place to ensure that they prevent unsuitable people from gaining access to children.

To ensure that the Council fulfils its obligation all governors must be CRB checked on successful appointment or election (including re-appointments and re-elections).

Failing the check or failure to undergo such a check automatically disqualifies any individual from becoming a school governor.

## **Why do Schools Need Governors?**

- Every school has a governing body to represent the public in the running of schools. They support the headteacher and staff and they are accountable to their stakeholders for the school's overall performance and for decisions they have made.
- They have a strategic role to promote high standards of educational achievement, ensuring that adequate plans are made and legal obligations are met. Appropriate targets should be set for pupil achievement at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4.
- They ensure that the curriculum for the school is balanced and broadly based, and in particular that it includes the National Curriculum, Religious Education and (in secondary schools) sex education. They report National Curriculum assessments and results to parents, the LEA and the DfES.
- They manage the school's budget, including determining the staff complement and making decisions on staff pay.
- They appoint the headteacher and deputy headteacher and determine how the appointment of other staff will be managed, and establish procedures for management of staff conduct and discipline and staff grievances. They review annually a performance management policy for staff appraisal.
- They draw up an Action Plan after an inspection.
- They have duties to pupils with Special Educational Needs.
- They provide guidance on the direction and character of the school,

A good governing body will therefore -

- take a strategic view;
- be a 'critical friend';
- ensure accountability.

## Do I need qualifications?

No, schools need volunteers (whether parents or not) with experience of life, but some governors may have qualifications/professional skills. Governors do not have to be educational experts. They are there to provide an independent view and common sense approach.

What you do need is: enthusiasm; energy; time; a willingness to be open to new ideas and attend basic training; and good communication/interpersonal skills

Being a governor involves being committed and giving significant amounts of time and energy. Careful consideration of these commitments should be made when agreeing to serve on the governing body of a school.

## What does a governing body do?

Part of a school governing body's responsibilities are to:

- promote high standards of educational attainment;
- agree the School Improvement Plan;
- set an annual budget detailing planned spending;
- approve a staffing structure;
- make sure that the curriculum is balanced and broadly based, in particular that the National Curriculum and Religious Education are taught, and report on pupils' achievement in National Curriculum assessments and examination results.

- draw up an action plan following an Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) report;
- produce policies on a number of issues including Sex Education, S.E.N;
- appoint staff, ensuring the implementation of a range of personnel procedures;
- secure high levels of attendance and good standards of pupil behaviour;
- ensure the health & safety of pupils and staff;
- develop the strategic plan for the school, acting as a critical friend and ensuring accountability;
- deal with complaints against the school

In addition, every year governing bodies produce an annual report for parents and arrange a meeting at which this can be discussed.

Basically, governors oversee the work of the school and make sure it provides a good quality education for its pupils.

Governors work in partnership with the headteacher and staff.

## How much time will I need to give?

This can be a time consuming job, Governors meetings take place in the evening normally starting at 6.30 p.m. and continuing through the evening, most meetings take around 3 hours.

Two Waters school usually has between three meetings per term.

If you are a member of a committee, these meet at least once every half term and meetings would not be expected to last more than two hours, these take place at 5.30 p.m. and 6.30 p.m. depending on which committee you are a member of.

If you are linked to a subject or a class then we would expect you to visit at least once a term with the meeting lasting around two hours, classroom visits can take longer than link subject visits.

## Governing Body Meetings

- Governing bodies must by law meet at least 3 times a year but usually meets every half-term.
- Meetings are not open to the public, but the governing body can invite 'an observer' if they wish.
- The meeting must be quorate - decisions/resolutions cannot be made unless a minimum quorum.
- A governor can be disqualified from office if he or she fails to attend a meeting for 6 months, without the consent of the governing body. The governing body of Two Waters School requires attendance at all meetings, unless there are genuine circumstances for the governing body to consider before approving your absence.
- A Chair and Vice Chair must be elected at the first meeting of the academic year - anyone employed at the school cannot be elected as Chair or Vice Chair.
- 7 days notice must be given in order for a meeting to be held. Shorter notice may be given if the Chair agrees there is an urgent need.
- The minutes of the meeting, agenda and any other papers must be made available.
- The governing body do not have to make every decision - they can delegate some of their functions and powers to the headteacher or to a committee.

For further information on how meetings should be conducted consult the Guide to the Law and in particular the Education Regulations at the back of the Guide to the Law.

How much of my time do I have to give?

This depends on what you are able to offer. It also depends on the governing body that you join. You will need time to attend at least one governing body meeting per term, this is a statutory requirement.

Most governing bodies have a number of committees. These are made up of at least 3-5 members to look at specific areas of work, e.g. finance, premises, curriculum. The committees make decisions on behalf of the governing body, or recommendations depending on their terms of reference.

Most of the statutory termly meetings are held during the evening, but committees may meet in the day or evening by mutual agreement.

Governors are expected to join at least one committee. They usually meet once or twice a term for most committees.

In addition it is important to get to know the school by visiting it whilst it is in session and by supporting events.

Most governors serve for a four year period and many continue for a second or even third term by being reappointed or re-elected.

## Will I receive training?

Yes, a comprehensive range of training is provided. We aim to address all of the key issues necessary to fulfil the role of a school governor. Most of the training sessions are held at local schools or Stevenage. It is a requirement of the governing body at Two Waters School to attend regular training courses. Most courses are in the evenings, normally for two hours. All governors should attend induction training upon appointment. As a means of continued support a termly

newsletter is produced for governors. This provides topical information and details of forthcoming training are also included.

It should be noted that governors appointed to the governing body of Two Waters School will be expected to commit the time required to attend meetings and training courses, in order to effectively contribute to their role.

## What about time off from work?

Under employment law, employers must give employees who are school governors 'reasonable time off' to carry out their duties. The employee and employer have to agree on what is 'reasonable time off'. Among the points they will want to discuss are.

- how much time is needed to carry out a governor's duties;
- whether the employee is also being given time off from work for other activities;
- the particular circumstances of the employer's business and the likely effect that the employee's absence may have on it.

### Payment for time off

Employers may give time off with pay, but do not have to do so. This is for discussion between the employee and the employer.

### Settling disagreements

If the employee and employer cannot agree on any of these questions, either of them can ask for help from the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS), which will try to settle any differences informally. An employee who is still not satisfied may complain to an employment tribunal.

### Please note

Employers have a legal obligation to permit employees who are in the following categories to have reasonable time off during working hours:

- A Justice of the Peace;
- A member of any statutory tribunal;
- A member of a Regional Health Authority;
- A member of the managing or governing body of an education establishment.

If you are an employee of the local Borough Council it is normally the Chief Executive who is authorised for these purposes to grant employees leave of absence with pay for **up to 18 days** in any leave year subject to the deduction of any allowance received.

With regard to duties as a member of another local authority, leave of absence with pay for up to **208 hours** in any leave year is permitted, in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, subject to the deduction of any allowance received.