

## Governor's Guide to Foundation Governors

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The composition of governing bodies of all governing bodies in schools is set out in DfE Regulations. In Voluntary Aided (VA) schools, the foundation governors must be in a majority of two. In Voluntary Controlled (VC) and foundation church schools, there must be at least two foundation governors or up to one-quarter of the membership. Different rules apply to federated governing bodies. Foundation governors are normally appointed for four years.

### 2 Types of Foundation Governor

- 2.1 There are various routes by which a foundation governor may be appointed to a church school governing body:
- (i) by virtue of being an incumbent of a parish, or occasionally the rural dean
  - (ii) by the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE)
  - (iii) by the DBE via a nomination from the Parochial Church Council (PCC)
  - (iv) by any foundation body relation to the trustees, or the original founders of the school
- 2.2 Incumbents of parishes with a church school are normally ex-officio foundation governors, particularly in the primary sector, that is, they are members of the governing body because they hold the office of incumbent. It is hoped that all incumbents whose parish includes a Church of England school will feel able to take up his or her ex-officio position on the governing body. The church school is very much part of the local worshipping community.

### 3 Diocesan Appointments and PCC nominations

- 3.1 The Diocesan Board of Education usually appoints all the foundation governors, apart from those appointed by virtue of their office, on each governing body in the Diocese, with nominations being made by the PCC for many appointments in VA schools. Nominations may also be invited from the incumbent of the parish in which the school is situated, or nominees may be sought using other Diocesan networks. However, all will be mindful of the need for all foundation governors to uphold and strengthen the Christian foundation of its schools.  
*Please see the Diocesan Policy for the appointment of foundation governors for further details.*
- 3.2 However, these governors are not delegates and should there be a vote on any issue at a governors' meeting, in common with all their fellow governors, whether elected or appointed, they should vote according to their conscience.

### 4 Roles and Responsibilities of Foundation Governors

- 4.1 Every governor whether appointed, elected or ex-officio has the same duties and responsibilities. As a corporate body, the responsibilities of church school governors include – religious education, staffing, finance, and in VA and foundation schools, admission of pupils and buildings and maintenance. Foundation governors should have a particular concern for the religious education and collective worship in the school and in making financial decisions should recognise that religious education deserves full resourcing support (*please refer to the Diocesan Code of Practice for Foundation Governors*)
- 4.2 *“Foundation governors are appointed or take office by virtue of an office that they hold. Where appointed, the appointment is made by the person identified in the instrument of government (usually the school's founding body, church or other organisation). A foundation governor is someone who, in the opinion of the person entitled to appoint them, has the skills*

to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school, and who is appointed for the purpose of securing:

- *In all cases that the school's character (including religious character where it has one) is preserved and developed and*
- *That the school is conducted in accordance with the foundation's governing documents.*

*In appointing a foundation governor, the person entitled to make the appointment should seek to understand and take into account the skills and experience the governing body identifies that they need.”<sup>1</sup>*

The foundation's governing document in a church school is usually the Trust Deed. The Trust Deed is a document that relates to the original foundation of the school and sets out the reasons why the school was first set up. It is not always readily available and some, which are over 100 years old, are very difficult to read. Since 1999 all church schools have had an ethos statement as part of the Instrument of Government. The ethos statement relates to the school's Christian foundation and for church schools sets the context in which governors carry out their responsibilities. A copy of the ethos statement adopted by the majority of Church of England schools is reproduced below:

*Recognising its historic foundation, the school will preserve and develop its religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England and in partnership with the Church at parish and diocesan level.*

*The school aims to serve its community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers all its pupils.*

## **5 Church School Ethos**

- 5.1 The above statement serves a specific purpose as part of a legal document rooting the school in its Christian foundation; the ethos of statement is only relevant to those schools which have a religious character. All schools will, however, develop their own ethos whether or not they have a religious character and in broader terms it may be defined as the prevailing character, tone and spirit of an institution.
- 5.2 Church Schools do not have the monopoly on loving and caring relationships; nevertheless the church school is institutionally rooted in the Christian faith and is thus different from any other school. In seeking to preserve the character of their schools, foundation governors will want to contribute to sustaining, developing and nurturing the school's Christian ethos. Governors of VA schools have the legal right to appoint Christian staff, set the RE and the collective worship policy. However, in all church schools the Christian values and ethos create a place of education in which the Christian faith is manifest through every aspect of school life. Each church school has the reasonability of recognising, celebrating and developing the full God given human potential of each person, whether pupil, member of staff, parent or governor. The governing body, particularly foundation governors, should seek to ensure that Christian principles are embedded in the policies and day to day life of the school.

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<sup>1</sup> School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012