

## Policy advice: clergy and chairing governing bodies

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It has been the policy of the Board for at least ten years to discourage parochial clergy from chairing the governing bodies<sup>1</sup> of church schools in their parishes. I understand this change from age-old practice was introduced in the early nineties as the role of chairman had become increasingly demanding of time and energy. This advice has been given consistently by officers of the Board since that time. I believe, following recent discussions with the three archdeacons, that it would be helpful for the Board to reiterate this policy and to take steps to ensure it is more widely understood and observed. The issue is generally more acute in primary schools than in secondaries.

### Reasons for the policy

There are a number of reasons underlying the policy:

- § The demands of acting as an effective chairman of a governing body (many of them beyond the actual meetings of the governing body) have grown considerably over time and seem unlikely to decrease. Few, if any, clergy have the resources available to provide this adequately without detriment to their other responsibilities in the parish.
- § On occasions their pastoral role can clash with the role the chairman has to take, for example in handling matters of pupil or staff discipline.
- § Schools need the support of their parish clergy most essentially in other ways – pastoral, leading worship, encouraging the parish to support the school, etc. – which should take priority in the use of their time. It is particularly important that the headteacher should have someone they can turn to who is outside the arrangements for performance review or matters of discipline.

### Proposed policy

**It is the policy of the Diocesan Board of Education that parochial clergy be discouraged from acting as chairman of the governing body of a church school within their parish, unless there are exceptional<sup>2</sup> circumstances.**

### Implementation

The Board is recommended to invite the three archdeacons to review this issue annually with any clergy who are currently acting as chairman of the governing body of a school within their parish. The policy will be published in our normal mailing to schools and included in the advice and training we are developing for clergy with church schools in their parish.

**Jeremy Taylor**  
Director of Education

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<sup>1</sup> They are, of course, *ex officio* governors of any school(s) within their parish; this role is vital to maintain the interest of the foundation of the school and to maintain positive links between the school and the parish.

<sup>2</sup> **Exceptional** might include instances such as making the transition from one chairman to the next if the latter needs to gain more experience as a governor, or in specific crises in the life of the school or if the school has drifted away from its church foundation.