

Why have staff governors?

- As an employee, the staff governor has a unique insight into the activities of the school.
- The staff governor brings to the governing body an understanding of the school's ethos and culture as well as a close, professional knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses.
- Staff must have a voice on the governing body so that they can contribute, in partnership with other governors, to the strategic development of the school.
- The staff governor serves as a useful link between the staff and the governing body.
- Staff are key stake-holders in the school and as such must have mechanisms for their views to be included in school evaluation and improvement.

How can the staff governor be a useful member of the governing body?

Staff governors are representatives of the staff but do not have a mandate to put forward a particular point of view. Your role is to present the views of the staff reasonably and faithfully. You should seek colleagues' views and make them known to the governing body, but be free to act in accordance with your own conscience and in the interests of the pupils as you see them. It is crucial to remember that, as a governor, your first responsibility is to the school and the governing body.

The staff governor also brings specialist knowledge and skills to the governing body, which can help in several ways. This includes:

Contributing to discussions by:

- *explaining the likely effect of any proposal on pupils' learning or wellbeing;*
- *drawing attention to the likely effect of a proposal on the staff.*

Developing mutual understanding by:

- *reporting back and explaining the reasons for the governing body's decision to colleagues and improving staff's understanding of the role of the governing body;*
- *contributing up to date, regular and robust information to broaden governors' understanding of the curriculum and pupil achievement;*
- *helping staff and governors get to know one another better;*
- *assisting the headteacher to ensure that governors are informed about special achievements by individual members of staff and encouraging fellow governors to acknowledge these.*

Supporting the governing body's monitoring and evaluation processes by:

- *encouraging the headteacher and other staff to supply information about the school's progress in clear language;*
- *encouraging the governing body to ask questions that enable it to measure progress;*
- *responding positively, constructively and honestly to questions from colleague governors.*

Focusing on important issues by:

- bringing staff opinions to the attention of the governing body;
- keeping the classroom and children's learning at the heart of discussions by the governing body.

What works well?

Here are some examples of good practice in school:

- During elections, and on appointment, ensure that all members of staff understand the role of the staff governor. This can prevent members of staff attempting to use you as a channel for concerns. Many staff governors introduce themselves and their role at a staff meeting.
- Attend induction training. You may feel that you already know a great deal about schools in general, and your school in particular, but governorship brings new and different responsibilities.
- It is helpful to form an understanding with the headteacher as to how you will act in cases where your views may be different from the headteacher.
- Get to know as many members of staff as possible. This is easier in a primary than a large secondary but do your best.
- Encourage governors to take opportunities to get to know the staff.
- Include an agenda item at some staff meetings for staff governors to hear the staff's views on subjects to be discussed by governors.
- Represent all staff views and not just particular friendship or work groups.
- that others hold different views. You do not need to canvass staff to get exact numbers or the complete range of opinion but try and give the governing body an impression of the balance of opinion.
- Inform new staff of your role – ensure this is covered at their induction.
- Make sure that, once agreed, minutes (except confidential minutes) are posted in the staff room or in an accessible file.
- Use notice boards to publicise governing body activities.

Conduct and Protocols

- Governing bodies need the full participation of staff governors in order to be well informed about the implications of their decisions. A few specific points need to be understood by all members of the governing body:
- Staff governors may participate in all activities of the governing body, including the selection and recruitment of staff, as long as they have no greater interest in the matter than other staff in the school. In common with all governors, staff governors also need to consider whether there is reasonable doubt as to whether they can act impartially within the principles of natural justice.
- Staff governors must withdraw from the meeting when considering an agenda item in which they have a personal interest greater than that of other staff e.g. a promotion or possibly a situation where he or she has been involved in a particular issue relating to an individual pupil or parent.
- The Regulations prevent people employed at the school being present during the discussion of, and decision on, any matter concerned with the pay and appraisal of individuals also employed at the school. It is, however, advisable for staff governors to be present when policy matters are discussed such as pay or performance management.

- The chair and the governing body should create a climate where staff governors can speak freely even on occasions when they disagree with the headteacher. However, internal disputes that ought to be settled by the senior management of the school should not be brought to the governing body until internal procedures have been exhausted.
- Where an issue arises which may be an area of conflict with the headteacher, you are advised to discuss this with him/her before the governors' meeting so that s/he knows that you may be putting an alternative view at the meeting.
- Remember the importance of not disclosing confidential information or details of voting. Most governing body business is conducted openly and can be shared with colleagues. However, there may be occasions when an item on the agenda is deemed by the governing body to be confidential. This is usually because it involves an individual pupil or member of staff. In these cases, you should not disclose or discuss any information relating to the matter.
- You must stay loyal to the decisions the governing body makes, unless you have requested that the minutes record your dissent.