

## The Foundation Governor

### 1. Introduction

The composition of governing bodies of church schools is set out in The School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2003. In voluntary aided (VA) schools, the foundation governors must be in a majority of two. In voluntary controlled (VC) schools, the foundation governors number at least two but no more than a quarter of the total number of governors.

### 2. Term of office

The usual term of office for a foundation governor will be four years regardless of the type of school (as with all other categories of governor this can be varied by the Instrument of Government). Those bodies which appoint foundation governors (parochial church councils, diocesan board of education etc.) should be consulted on the period of office.

### 3. Types of Foundation Governor

There are various routes by which a foundation governor may be appointed to a church school governing body:

- by virtue of being an incumbent of a parish;
- by the Parochial Church Council (PCC);
- by the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE);
- by a foundation body relating to the trustees, or the original founders of the school.

Incumbents of parishes with a church school are normally *ex officio* foundation governors, 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. Incumbents should take their role in relation to the church school very seriously but if the Incumbent does not wish, or is unable to be a governor, the Diocesan Director of Education should be informed.

### 4. Diocesan Representatives on Governing Bodies

The Diocesan Board of Education appoints representatives to each school governing body in the Diocese, although the number does vary and there is often only one Diocesan representative on a controlled school governing body. Where there is a vacancy for a Diocesan representative, nominations are usually sought from the incumbent of the parish in which the school is situated, but nominees may be sought using other Diocesan networks. The Diocesan Board of Education is mindful of the need for its representatives to uphold and strengthen the Christian foundation of its schools. Diocesan Board representatives may be expected to put forward Diocesan Board of Education policy where pertinent to a particular issue of debate at governors' meetings. The Board sends out termly Newsletters to keep governors aware of policy and other initiatives. However, such representatives 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.

## **5. Roles and Responsibilities of Foundation Governors**

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 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. They should also seek to maintain and develop the links with the local church. Foundation governors of VC schools have less autonomy in such matters, but are responsible for the collective worship policy, appointing a member of staff to teach religious education, as well as having, (in most cases), some control over use of the school building on Sundays.

Foundation governors also have a special responsibility for securing that the character of the school as a Church of England voluntary school is preserved and developed and that the school is conducted in accordance with the provisions of the school's Trust Deed and its ethos statement. 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. The ethos statement is contained in the Instrument of Government and all schools have access to this through their local authority. The ethos statement relates to the school's Christian foundation and for church schools sets the context in which governors carry out their responsibilities.