

Who are school governors and what do they do?

School governors are people who want to make a positive contribution to children's education.

Governors are the largest volunteer force in the country and have an important part to play in raising school standards through their three key roles of:

- setting strategic direction,
- ensuring accountability and
- monitoring and evaluating school performance.

School governors come from every walk of life. There are over 300,000 school governors in England and they form the largest volunteer force in the country.

Each individual governor is a member of a governing body, which is established in law as a corporate body. Individual governors may not act independently of the rest of the governing body. Decisions are the joint responsibility of the governing body; they are answerable to parents and the community.

The role of the governing body is a strategic one; its key functions are to:

- set the aims and objectives for the school
- set the policies for achieving those aims and objectives
- set the targets for achieving those aims and objectives
- monitor and evaluate the progress the school is making towards achievement of its aims and objectives
- be a source of challenge and support to the Headteacher (a critical friend)

The Headteacher is responsible for day to day management and control of the school, internal organisation and implementation of the strategic framework established by the Governing Body.

The governors' role is not about fundraising; neither is it about cheerleading for the school - though governors might do both those things. School governors provide strategic leadership and accountability in schools. Governors appoint the head teacher and are involved in the appointment of other staff. It is governors who hold the main responsibility for finance in schools, and it is governors who work with the head teacher to make the tough decisions about balancing resources.

The personal benefits of becoming a school governor:

Being a governor is an enormously challenging and rewarding opportunity. The personal benefits can be summarised as:

- A sense of satisfaction through knowing children will benefit from your efforts
- The opportunity to develop new skills and to strengthen existing ones
- The opportunity to work with people from a variety of social, cultural and religious backgrounds
- The opportunity to gain understanding in key areas such as finance, personnel, and strategic planning
- The opportunity to gain awareness of the education system as a whole

Through solving problems ranging from finance to site management, human resources to marketing, pupil welfare to curriculum development, every governor is guaranteed to broaden their skills and knowledge in some way, and this can be enhanced through training offered by Local Authorities.

As all decisions are made with the consensus of the whole governing body there is also the opportunity to utilise the softer skills of teamwork, communication and tolerance.

Types of school and categories of governor:

There are a number of different types of state schools in England:

- community
- voluntary controlled
- voluntary aided
- foundation
- trust - a type of foundation school
- academies & City Technology Colleges (CTCs) - independent state funded schools

Blakedown CE Primary is voluntary controlled.

There are also different categories of governor who are appointed in different ways:

- **Parent Governors** are voted onto the governing body by other parents and are usually parents of children who attend the school.
- **Staff Governors** are elected by staff within the school
- **Community Governors** are appointed by the governing body to represent the community They may also have no previous experience or knowledge of the school whose governing body they join.
- **Foundation Governors** are appointed by the organisation that set up the school to represent their interests. Further information on foundation governors is available from SGOSS.
- **Co-opted Governors** who are appointed by the governing body and who, in the opinion of the governing body, has the skills required to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school.
- **Local Authority (LA) Governors** are appointed by the Local Authority that maintains the school and in some cases these appointments are made on a party political basis. SGOSS is able to advise on particular circumstances in each area.

What makes a good school governor?

The most important quality is the desire to make a difference to the lives of children, and then:

The ability to work in a team

A desire to help the community

An external perspective

A willingness to challenge assumptions

The time to get involved

Any of the following skills will also add value:

Marketing

Strategic Planning

Languages

HR

Art and Design

Project Management

Science and Technology

Health and Safety

Finance

Communications

Problem Solving

IT

Legal Knowledge

Decision Making

Engineering