

# Becoming a Parent Governor



Being a parent governor at your child's school comes with a lot of responsibility, but for the right kind of parent, the rewards of seeing the school and the students flourish make it all worthwhile.

## What is a parent governor?

Parent governors are a core part of a school's Board of Governors. The role is voluntary (unpaid, though you may occasionally be able to claim back expenses for things like travel and child care), and will appeal to parents who want to make a positive impact on their child's education and school life. The outcome is indirect, since the governor role has little interaction with the pupils or with daily school life, but is much more 'behind the scenes'. As well as parent governors, a school's Board of Governors consists of:

- A staff governor
- Local authority governors
- Foundation governors
- Co-opted governors

## What role do parent governors play?

Parent governors play a vital role on Governing Boards, holding the unique position of having a parental viewpoint of the school. Through the children, they have a first-hand experience of the delivery of the curriculum, and how the school is perceived from the 'consumers' point of view. This enables parent governors to bring a different perspective to the strategic management of the school. It is important for parent governors to establish a rapport with the parental body which elected them, whilst continuing to maintain a strategic approach to school governance. Although being available to advise parents on appropriate routes of action is a very important aspect of the role, it is vital that parent governors do not personally become involved in individual concerns. Apart from the possibility of these jeopardising appropriate complaints and appeals procedures, no governor has the authority to act individually on behalf of the school.

Parent governors are **representative parents** rather than **representatives of parents**.

To effectively fulfil the role, parent governors should:

- make themselves known to the parent body
- attend governor training sessions
- listen impartially to any concerns raised by parents
- guide parents regarding appropriate lines of action and procedures
- present a balanced view of issues, representing different sections of the community

Achieving a balance between being the impartial representative parent and the often emotional issues relating to individual children's education, can sometimes be very difficult. Although this is a very delicate role, there is ample support and training available. Effective parent governors will find working alongside the other members of the Governing Board both interesting and rewarding in that their efforts will ensure that the work of the Governing Board fulfils its duties to all children.

Parent governors bring their wealth of experience and knowledge, contributing to the successful running of their child's school. Being a governor is a 'hands off' role – decisions made by the Board influence the whole school, but governors are not responsible for, or involved in, the day-to-day running of the school. The role is a necessary part of ensuring the good functioning of school leadership. Governors set the ethos of the school and drive for continuous improvement, and they also oversee financial performance and ensure money is well-spent.

## How big a commitment is being a parent governor?

The term of office is usually four years. During this time, you would be expected to commit to try to attend all Governing Board meetings. The Governing Board at the Aylesbury Vale Academy meets seven times a year, currently on Wednesdays from 3.30 – 5.30 p.m. Before each meeting, you would be expected to read through all the papers, presented for the Board by the school; these include finance, assessment data, strategic planning, policies for review and various reports on aspects of the school such as safeguarding, SEND, Premises, Health and Safety etc.

Additionally, you will be expected to visit the school as part of your duties and take on training for the role. You may also be invited to school events such as awards evenings, open days, concerts, sports days etc. to increase the visibility of the Governing Board to parents. Under current employment law, employers must allow employees to undertake their duties at school, but this may be paid or unpaid, so speak to your employer and find out what their policy is. You may resign at any time by giving written notice to the Clerk to the Board of Governors.

## What skills do parent governors need?

There is no set skillset that marks out an ideal parent governor. So long as you are over 18 years of age and have a child at the school you can express an interest in becoming a parent governor for the school. There's also a legal requirement for parents to be DBS checked before starting their post as a governor.

## What's in it for parents?

There's plenty of opportunity to learn new skills, working with others to help to develop useful policies that will benefit the education of children. The role may sound formal, but governors play a vital role in the overall management of the school and most people enjoy their time as a governor, as well as appreciating the sense of duty and opportunity to show loyalty to their school. The experiences of school governorship look great on any CV, and can even create career opportunities. Not only that, but you will also get to know your child's school, especially in terms of its strengths and the challenges it faces. You will gain a great understanding of how the school is run, and this will have a positive knock-on effect on your child's education, academic outcomes and school life.

## How do you become a parent governor?

If you are interested in exploring the possibility of becoming a parent governor, complete the nomination form attached or email the Chair of Governors [cog@theacademy.me](mailto:cog@theacademy.me) to find out more.

## How are parent governors appointed?

Schools fill parent governor roles through elections. Parent governors are elected by other parents, who can vote for candidates. Any parent with a child at the school is eligible to apply for the position of governor, but there is no guarantee of being elected to the Board.

## What about conflicts of interest?

Objectivity is essential to the role. Parent governors must promote the best interests of all children at the school, and have a duty to maintain good relations with and be available to the other parents. Parent governors should not use Governing Board meetings to raise issues affecting their own child at the expense of others. They can withdraw from meetings where they are concerned that they could not be impartial, or would stand to gain by the outcome of a resolution. It is not possible to stand as a parent governor if you are an elected member of your Local Authority (LA) or if you are employed by the school.

Boards of Governors have a statutory duty to draw up admissions criteria to be used to select pupils where applications exceed available places in line with the Department of Education's admissions arrangement.