

St Teresa's Catholic Primary School (Devon Street)

Governorship

The Role of a school governor is to contribute to the work of the governing body in ensuring high standards of achievement for all children and young people in the school by:

- Setting the school's vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding the Head teacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils; and
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure it's money is well spent.

There are a number of different categories of governor that make up the governing body at St Teresa's:

- Foundation Governor (appointed by the Archdiocese)
- Local Authority Governor (appointed by the local authority)
- Parent Governor (elected by the parents of children at the school)
- Staff Governor (elected by the school's non-teaching and teaching staff)

N.B. In addition to the categories listed above the Head teacher may also be a governor of the school

As a member of St Teresa's governing body our governors are expected to:

1. Contribute to the strategic discussions at governing body meetings which determine:
 - the vision and ethos of the school;
 - clear and ambitious strategic priorities and targets for the school;
 - that all children, including those with special educational needs, have access to a broad and balanced curriculum;
 - the school's budget, including the expenditure of the pupil and sports premium allocations;
 - the school's staffing structure and key staffing policies;
 - the principles to be used by school leaders to set other school policies.
2. Hold the senior leaders to account by monitoring the school's performance which includes:
 - agreeing the outcomes from the school's self-evaluation and ensuring they are used to inform the priorities in the school development plan;
 - considering all relevant data and feedback provided, on request or by school leaders and external sources on all aspects of school performance;
 - asking challenging questions of school leaders;
 - ensuring senior leaders have arranged for the required audits to be carried out and receiving the results of those audits;
 - ensuring senior leaders have developed the required policies and procedures and the school is operating effectively according to those policies;
 - acting as a link governor on a specific issue, making relevant enquiries of the relevant staff, and reporting to the governing body on the progress on the relevant school priority; and
 - listening to and reporting to the school's stakeholders : pupils, parents, staff, and the wider community, including local employers.

3. Ensure the school's staff have the resources and support they require to do their jobs well, including the necessary expertise on business management, external advice where necessary, effective appraisal and CPD (Continuing Professional Development), and suitable premises, and that the way in which those resources are used has a positive impact.
4. When required, serve on panels of governors to:
 - appoint the Head teacher and other senior leaders;
 - appraise the Head teacher;
 - set the Head teacher's pay and agree the pay recommendations for other staff;
 - hear the second stage of staff grievances and disciplinary matters;
 - hear appeals about pupil exclusions.

The role of governor is largely a thinking and questioning role, not a doing role.

A governor does NOT:

- write school policies;
- undertake audits of any sort – whether financial or health & safety - even if the governor has the relevant professional experience;
- send a lot of time working with the pupils of the school – if they want to work directly with children, there are many other valuable voluntary roles within the school;
- fundraise – this is the role of the PTA – the governing body considers income streams and the potential for income generation, but does not carry out fundraising tasks;
- undertake classroom observations to make judgements on the quality of teaching – the governing body monitors the quality of teaching in the school by requesting data from the senior staff and from external sources;
- do the job of the school staff – if there is not enough capacity within the paid staff team to carry out the necessary tasks, the governing body need to consider and rectify this.

As they become more experienced as a governor, there are other roles within the governing body that governors can undertake which can increase their degree of involvement and level of responsibility (e.g as a chair of a committee). This document does not cover the additional roles taken on by the chair, vice-chair and chairs of committees.

In order to perform their role well, St Teresa's governors are expected to:

- get to know the school, including by visiting the school occasionally during school hours, and gain a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses;
- attend induction training and regular relevant training and development events;
- attend meetings (full governing body meetings and committee meetings) and read all the papers before the meeting;
- act in the best interest of all the pupils of the school; and
- behave in a professional manner, as set down in the governing body's code of conduct, including acting in strict confidence.

Time commitment: Under usual circumstances, our governors can expect to spend between 10 and 20 days a year on their governing responsibilities; the top end of this commitment, which equates to up to half a day per week in term time, is most relevant to the chair and others with key roles, such as chairs of committees. Initially, the governing body would expect a governor's commitment to be nearer 10 days a year.

However, there may be periods when our governor's time commitment may increase, for example when recruiting a Head teacher. Some longstanding governors may tell you that they spend far more time than this on school business; however, it is fairly common for governors to undertake additional volunteering roles over and above governance.

THE MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES OF FOUNDATION GOVERNORS

Foundation Governors are appointed for a four-year term by the Episcopal Vicar for Schools and Colleges, on behalf of the Archbishop, to represent the interests of the Trustees of the Archdiocese or, in schools under the Trusteeship of a Religious Order, by the person approved by the Order to make such appointments to serve the interests of their Trusteeship, working under the authority of the Archbishop. For secondary schools they are nominated by the Chair of Governors who will first have consulted the Pastoral Area Leader(s) and in primary schools by the Parish Priest. Foundation Governors form the majority on a Catholic school's governing body. They have the responsibility of assisting the Bishop, by sustaining and developing the Catholic ethos and distinctive Catholic nature of the school in which they serve. They have a specific commission that takes the form of an undertaking to ensure that the school is at all times conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Archdiocesan Trust Deed.

The Instrument of Government contains a very important clause which specifies how the school must be run. It reads as follows:

“The school was founded by and is part of the Catholic Church. The school is to be conducted as a Catholic school in accordance with the Canon Law and teachings of the Catholic Church, and in accordance with the Trust Deed of the Archdiocese of Liverpool, and in particular:

- a) religious education is to be in accordance with the teachings, doctrines, discipline and general and particular norms of the Catholic Church;
- b) religious worship is to be in accordance with the rites, practices, discipline and liturgical norms of the Catholic Church:

and at all times the school is to serve as a witness to the Catholic faith of Our Lord Jesus Christ.”

This is a very clear statement to governors about the way in which they must conduct their school, and your particular attention is drawn to the last two lines, which prescribe that, in everything it does and in all aspects of its work, the school must serve as a witness to Our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, a Catholic school is not one which merely follows the secular National Curriculum with Catholic religious education and liturgical worship bolted on, but rather an institution where Gospel values and the Catholic faith are at the heart of everything and permeate every facet of its work.

Governors, along with the Head teacher and senior school team, form the leadership team of the school. They have a crucial role in ensuring the school is successful in meeting the needs of all its pupils and achieving high standards.

They are, along with all other categories of governors, under a legal duty to conduct their school with a view to promoting high educational standards (Education Act 2002) and to promote the well-being of pupils at the school, promote community cohesion, have regard to any relevant Children and Young People Plan and to have regard to the views espoused by parents/guardians of registered pupils.

Governors in a voluntary aided school are the employers of the staff, both teaching and support staff. Some staff may be employed through a service agreement with an outside body. The Articles of Government sets out the procedure for the appointment and dismissal of staff.

Staff appointments are of particular importance since it is the staff who have the greatest influence on the ethos of the school. Governors should, in the first instance, seek to appoint Catholic teachers who combine personal conviction and practice of the Faith with the qualities and experience required by particular posts. They must adhere to the guidance given in the Bishops Memorandum on Appointments (copy attached).

Governors have a legal responsibility for the curriculum, subject to the statutory provision for the National Curriculum. The Foundation Governors will ensure that the whole of the curriculum of the school is rooted in an understanding of life in conformity with the teaching of the Gospel and the Catholic Church. The schools in the Archdiocese must follow the schemes for Religious Education authorised by the Christian Education Department.

Governors are responsible for drawing up and administering the admission criteria for entry to the school. They should seek the guidance of the Archdiocese when undertaking this task. The Archdiocese has a policy to provide a place in a Catholic school for all children baptised in the Catholic tradition.

Governors are responsible for drawing up an annual budget of expenditure for the school in accordance with the funding delegated by the Local Authority (LA) and ensuring these funds are properly used.

Governors are responsible for the school property. They must ensure the premises are safe without risk to the health of staff, pupils and visitors. The condition of the building must be kept in a good state. They must also ensure that the school is adequately insured. Funding for this is received from the LA and the Archdiocese can arrange insurance cover with the Catholic Church Insurance Association.

Governing Bodies are required to meet a minimum of three times each year. However, Governors will be expected to give much more time than this, serving on committees and working parties, to deal with the full responsibilities of governing their school. Governors are expected to attend the full meetings and failure to do so on a regular basis may result in a Governor being removed from office.

Foundation Governors are encouraged to try to attend the training sessions arranged by the Archdiocese as well as the appropriate training provided by the LA.

Foundation Governors will normally be practising and committed Catholics. Since holding office as a Foundation Governor is a form of ministry or service in the Church, those appointed will have to confirm they are eligible and willing to serve in accordance with the commission from the Archbishop.

Foundation Governors wishing to resign should inform the Chair of Governors, who will notify the Archdiocese of the need for a new appointment.

On appointment, every Governor should receive from the Chair of Governors or the Clerk to the Governors a copy of the Instrument and the Articles of Government. They should also be furnished with at least the following items:

- copy of the school mission statement
- list of full Governing Body
- list of staff including areas of responsibility
- copy of current school prospectus
- copy of school development plan and self evaluation documentation
- summary of most recent OFSTED/Religious Inspection Reports
- list of policies adopted by the school
- calendar of governor meetings and school events
- a plan of the school