

SOUTHWARK DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

POLICY STATEMENT

FOUNDATION GOVERNOR APPOINTMENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Board believes that the preservation of the Christian ethos of church schools is of fundamental importance. The role of foundation governors is critical in preserving and developing this ethos and the Board, therefore, strongly advises PCCs to encourage its appointees in strengthening the links between the parish and the school.

1.2 Following several requests for advice from Parochial Church Council (PCC) secretaries, incumbents and headteachers this guidance is offered to assist PCCs when appointing governors to Church of England schools. It is important that PCCs follow consistent practice and that the needs of the school are taken into account when making appointments. Parishes with church schools have a responsibility to support the school and exercising care in the appointment of those representing the Parish as governors is one way that that support may be realised. By their very nature church secondary schools do not relate, necessarily, to only one parish and will draw pupils from a wide area: the advice contained in this paper could apply equally to bodies other than parishes which have a responsibility to appoint foundation governors.

1.3 The Board recognises the commitment of many parishes in the Diocese which see their church school(s) as part of the Church's mission and which already take seriously the appointment of members of their congregations to serve as foundation governors. The Board recognises that finding governors able to give the proper time and commitment to the task is not easy and does not wish, in offering this guidance, either to dictate the way in which PCC appointments are made, or to create any obstacles for PCCs. In most parishes there is now an additional responsibility to appoint parents who have children at the school as foundation governors (two in primary schools and three in secondary schools, see Instrument of Government for details). It is hoped that PCCs will see this guidance as an opportunity to review and either affirm its current practice or consider, where appropriate, changes to its policy.

2 THE CHURCH SCHOOL FOUNDATION

2.1 In voluntary aided church schools, foundation governors are in a majority on the governing body: in controlled and foundation church schools, foundation governors normally constitute one-quarter of the membership. PCCs need to be aware that in a majority of cases, particularly in primary schools, they are the main appointing body of foundation governors. This places an added responsibility on PCCs to ensure that those who are appointed as their representatives understand that they have a particular duty to ensure that the character of the school as a Church of England school is preserved and developed and that the school is conducted in accordance with the trust deed. PCCs should be mindful of the Church of England foundation of the school (except where the school has an ecumenical foundation) when appointing its representatives, however, it is recognised that sometimes there are good reasons for appointing those from other Christian churches.

2.2 Foundation governors should have a particular concern for religious education and worship in the school and at the same time make the most of opportunities to create a school in which the Christian faith is manifest through every aspect of the school's life. The church school is institutionally rooted in the Christian faith and is thus different from any other school. In seeking to preserve the character of their schools, foundation governors will want to contribute to sustaining, developing and nurturing the school's Christian ethos.

3 THE APPOINTMENT PROCESS

3.1 The appointment process should be agreed by the PCC and stated clearly so that everyone is aware how the appointments are made. The following is suggested as a possible model:

- (a) new appointees must be nominated and seconded by a member of the PCC or church congregation;
- (b) prospective appointees should be made aware of the responsibilities of foundation governors;

- (c) prospective appointees should provide reasons as to why they wish to serve the church and school as a foundation governor and the skills that they hope to bring to the governance of the school;
- (d) appointees should be communicant Anglicans, or members of other Christian churches;
- (e) normally, the PCC will consult with the chair of governors and the headteacher before making an appointment or re-appointment;
- (f) the PCC will ensure that the principles of equal opportunities are upheld in making its appointments.

3.2 In (a) above, PCCs may wish to consider whether this should be extended to include other churches within the benefice. In some parishes, church schools have links with other churches from which the school population is drawn. It may be desirable in such cases for the PCC to appoint a proportion of their foundation governors from other churches where there is a clear, established link. This should be clearly stated in any policy. It is sometimes the case that PCCs are unable to find the requisite number of foundation governors from their own congregation. On such occasions PCCs will have to look to the wider church community. It may be that there are people within local parishes which do not have a church school who would view being a school governor as an opportunity to serve the Church. Point (d) above allows for this eventuality. In making any appointment, PCCs will wish to ensure that, insofar as it is able, the foundation governors reflect the ethnic make-up of the school community.

Re-appointments

3.3 Being a member of a governing body commits a person to considerable responsibilities and duties. PCCs should be mindful of the need for continuity and stability on governing bodies in considering the re-appointment of an individual. However, there should be a mechanism for ensuring that appointees are fulfilling their responsibilities: re-appointment should not be automatic. Such information may be gleaned from the incumbent, the chair of governors and the headteacher. PCCs need to consider such issues as: regular attendance at meetings; commitment to the Church of England foundation; general commitment and loyalty to the school and the contribution made to the work of the governing body and its committees. Governing bodies cannot afford to have members who see their sole responsibility as attendance at meetings.

New appointments

3.4 In making new appointments, PCCs need to provide prospective appointees with sufficient information so that individuals are aware of the commitment they are taking on. They will need information about the specific role of foundation governors (outlined in section 2, above) and their responsibilities as members of a corporate governing body and about what will be expected of them, for example, the timing and number of meetings, expectations regarding membership of committees, visiting the school during the school day. It is recommended that new governors are given an information pack, such as that published by the SDBE, which provides for the inclusion of information by the school and by the PCC. It is also recommended that new governors are encouraged to attend appropriate training provided by the Diocesan Board of Education and/or local education authority.

3.5 There are regulations' in place which prevent certain people from being appointed as governors and PCCs should be aware of these when making appointments.

4 CONCLUSION

4.1 PCCs might wish to devise a policy statement in which the Parish's commitment to its church school, its staff and pupils and the education it provides is clearly stated. The statement might include practical expressions of the Parish's support for the school, one of which would be the seriousness with which it undertakes the appointment of its governors.

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