

SOUTHWARK DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION	
BRIEFING SHEET	
SUBJECT: ELECTION OF PARENT, TEACHER AND STAFF GOVERNORS	
RECIPIENT(S): Headteachers and Chairs of Governors of voluntary aided and foundation C of E Schools	
cc: Headteachers and Chairs of Governors of voluntary controlled C of E Schools for information	
SDBE CONTACT: Carol Jerwood	DATE: April 2004

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Education Act 2002 provides for the election of parent, teacher and staff governors. In voluntary aided and foundation schools the responsibility for arranging an election falls to the governing body; in voluntary controlled schools it falls to the LEA, although in practice this is usually delegated to the headteacher. The governing body may appoint a Returning Officer to be responsible for the oversight and organisation of the election. The governors may also appoint tellers to ensure the validity of the ballot papers and to count the votes.

1.2 The Instrument of Government specifies the number of parent, teacher and staff governors to be elected. The term of office is four years from the date of the election, although an individual may resign at any time.

2 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

2.1 In voluntary aided and foundation schools the governing body determines the procedures for elections. The governing body must determine:

- (i) who is a parent of a registered pupil at the school; and
- (ii) who is a member of the teaching or support staff.

2.2 The governing body may set any reasonable timescale for the election, usually 2 to 4 weeks depending on whether the election is for parents or members of staff.

2.3 The governing body may not set a minimum number of votes to be cast before a person is elected.

2.4 The ballot should be a secret one: an envelope for the return of the votes should accompany ballot papers. The name of the person to receive the votes (Returning Officer) and the address of the school should be clearly marked on the envelope. Elections must be held by secret ballot and the governing body must allow postal voting, where requested, and for votes to be returned by "pupil post".

2.5 Only votes cast on the ballot paper issued by the Returning Officer shall be considered as valid votes. Votes cast on any other forms shall be void, the ballot paper should not be signed or marked in anyway. It should be made clear what procedures would be used in the event of a tied vote. Candidates should be invited to be present at the count.

2.6 The governing body must have clear procedures in place in the event of a tied vote. Votes should firstly be recounted, if the votes are still tied, the governors must decide whether to draw lots to determine the result.

2.7 The result should be notified to all parents, teachers and staff, as appropriate.

2.8 Any complaint or query arising from the election shall be dealt with by the governors.

3 PARENT GOVERNOR ELECTIONS

3.1 The election may be considered in a series of five specific steps.

Step 1 – Invite nominations: The Chair of governors arranges to distribute through the school, to each household with a registered pupil, a letter inviting nominations by a stated date. Information about the governor's period of office and general information about the governing body should be included (see annexes A & B). The governing body must take all reasonable steps in the case of parent governor elections, to ensure that all parents of registered pupils are informed of the election and their right to vote.

Parents may propose themselves for election, or may be proposed by another parent who has a registered pupil at the school. Parents may not propose more candidates than there are vacancies. Where a large number of households have a first language other than English, it is advisable that the letter be issued in that language.

Step 2 – Is a ballot required? Where the number of nominations is less than or equal to the number of vacancies, those nominated shall be declared elected unopposed. Parents should be informed by letter (see Annex C).

Step 3 – The ballot: the nominees must be informed that a ballot is to take place and that they will be invited to observe the counting of votes which will take place at the school on a stated date. The Returning Officer prepares a ballot paper listing all candidates, giving clear instructions on how to vote and indicating a return date for the ballot form (see Annexes C and D).

Step 4 – The count: on the appointed day, the count will be held at the school and the successful candidate(s) should receive a copy of the Instrument of Government, details of the length of the term of office, a list of the names, addresses and telephone numbers of his/her fellow governors and the date of the next meeting of the governing body.

Step 5 – Notification of the result: the chair of governors sends a letter to all parents indicating the result of the election.

4 VOTING PROCEDURE

4.1 Governors have discretion to determine how the votes will be cast, but must ensure that the ballot is secret. The following procedures may be considered, governors must decide beforehand which method, or combination of methods will be used.

(a) One envelope system

Parents are issued with an envelope addressed to the Returning Officer and with their name and that of the child clearly marked. Parents fold the ballot paper and seal this in the envelope and write their signature across the seal. This can then be checked against the register of those eligible to vote. The envelope is opened by a designated person and placed in the ballot box .

(b) Two envelope system

This is similar to the above, but the ballot paper is sealed in an unmarked envelope inside the marked envelope. This adds another layer of security. The inner envelope is opened at the count.

(c) Ballot box

Those eligible to vote register in person at the school (this requires a designated person to be available at set times to check in those parents before they place the ballot paper in the box.). This cannot be the only method used as parents must still be given the opportunity to vote by post or by pupil post.

5 IMPORTANT NOTES

5.1 Resignations: parent governors are not required to resign if their child leaves the school, but may complete their term of office. If a parent governor resigns, an election must take place as soon as possible.

5.2 Posting: may be by mail or by "pupil post". The failure of a parent/guardian to receive a ballot paper does not invalidate the election, but if you are using "pupil post", information should be posted first class to any parent/guardian whose child is absent on the day the information is sent.

5.3 Number of votes: It is usual for each parent to have one vote per vacancy regardless of the number of children they have in the school.

5.4 Outstanding vacancies if there are still vacancies at the end of an election, the governing body may approach a parent with a child in the school to fill the vacancy, if that fails, an approach may be made to a parent who has a child of school age (5-16).

6 ELECTION OF STAFF GOVERNORS

6.1 Elections for members of staff are rather simpler to conduct than parent governor elections, if only because the constituency is smaller. Governors should follow the principles set out for the election of parents, but should note the following.

6.2 Teacher elections: Only teachers are eligible to stand for election, this includes full- and part-time teachers and those employed under a contract for services, including peripatetic and regular supply teachers.

6.3 Staff elections: only staff (non-teaching) are eligible to stand for election, this includes full- and part-time staff and those employed under a contract for services, eg, cleaners and grounds maintenance staff.

6.4 Returning officer: The headteacher normally acts as Returning Officer.

6.5 Voting: Teachers and staff should have the opportunity to vote by post, in particular, for those temporarily absent from the school and for part-time teachers etc. Each member of staff should be given one vote per vacancy. **All staff are eligible to vote at any election whether for teachers or support staff.**

6.6 Resignations: Any teacher or staff governor who resigns from their post of employment at the school must resign as a governor.

ANNEX A

PARENT GOVERNOR ELECTION

MODEL LETTER TO PARENTS

To the parents of pupils attendingSchool

Dear Parent

.....School Governing Body

There is a vacancy on the governing body for (X) elected parent governor(s) and the election is due to take place shortly. All parents and guardians with children at the school are eligible to stand for election and to vote for candidates if there are more nominations than there are vacancies. Parent governors serve for four years from the date they are elected and are not required to stand down when their child leaves the school.

You are invited to submit nominations for the election on the attached form and return this to the school by (date). No nomination will be accepted after that date. You may nominate yourself or another parent with a pupil at the school, but if you are nominating someone else, please first check that they are willing to stand for election.

Those nominated to stand as parent governors may supply with their nomination form a short personal statement about themselves of not more than 100 words for circulation to the parents. If the number of nominations received does not exceed the number of vacancies for parent governors on the Governing Body all those nominated will be appointed without a ballot.

If an election needs to be held, the timetable for the election will be:

Ballot paper sent to parents	Date
Closing date for receipt of ballot paper	Date
Date of count of votes	Date

Nominations must be submitted to by 12 noon on.....

Yours sincerely

Chair of Governors

MODEL NOMINATION FORM

I wish to nominate myself for election as a parent governor or I wish to nominate the person(s) named below

If you are nominating someone else, you must check that they are willing to stand and ask him or her to sign the form below.

Name and Address (BLOCK CAPITALS)
.....
.....
.....

Name of Child
Child's School Year

Nominee's Signature
.....

Name and Address (BLOCK CAPITALS)
.....
.....
.....

Name of Child
Child's School Year

Nominee's signature
.....

Nominee's Personal Statement (not more than 100 words)

This form must be returned by

NB: Parents should not propose more candidates than there are vacancies. The form should therefore only include space for nominations equal to the number of vacancies.

MODEL LETTER FOR PARENT GOVERNOR ELECTION WHERE NO BALLOT HELD

Dear Parent

ELECTION OF PARENT GOVERNOR(S)

.....GOVERNING BODY

Further to my recent letter about the election of parent governor(s), the date for receiving nominations has now closed. Two candidates were proposed for the two vacancies and it is not necessary to proceed with a ballot. The following parents have therefore been elected unopposed and I am delighted to welcome them onto the governing body.

Name of parent governor

Name of parent governor

Yours sincerely

Chair of Governors

MODEL LETTER INCORPORATING THE BALLOT PAPER FOR ELECTING PARENT GOVERNORS

Dear Parent

ELECTION OF PARENT GOVERNOR(S)

.....GOVERNING BODY

You will recall that I wrote to you a short while ago notifying you of the election of parent governors. Since more nominations than vacancies have been received a secret ballot is to be held. The ballot paper and personal statements of the candidates are enclosed. Every parent of a registered pupil at the school is eligible to vote. The voting procedure is as follows:-

Every person eligible may vote for up to (no of vacancies)

A vote shall be indicated by placing the mark X against the candidates' name on the ballot paper;

(Explain voting procedure)

The envelope, addressed to the Returning Officer at the school, must be delivered by the time and date specified below to your child's school by any of the following means: with your child; through the post; or in person at the school.

The results of the election will be notified to parents by letter.

CLOSING TIME AND DATE FOR RECEIPT OF VOTES IS 12.00 noon ON (DATE)

Yours sincerely

Chair of Governors

BALLOT PAPER FOR ELECTION OF PARENT GOVERNOR(S)

..... GOVERNING BODY

MARK THE BOX(ES) OF YOUR CHOICE WITH AN X

YOU MAY CAST UP TO VOTES

Please note: If you vote for more than candidates, your ballot paper will be invalid

CANDIDATE A

CANDIDATE B

CANDIDATE C

(Etc. according to number of candidates)

Candidates' personal statements are enclosed or set out below.