

BCP Governor Services

A large green graphic consisting of two overlapping rounded rectangular shapes. The top shape is white with a green border and contains the text "Becoming a School Governor". The bottom shape is solid green and contains the text "A brief guide for those thinking about becoming a governor".

Becoming a School
Governor

A brief guide for those thinking
about becoming a governor

Welcome from The Governor Services Team

Contents

Welcome	Pg 2
Who are Governors?	Pg 3-4
Where do I fit in?	Pg 5
What training is available?	Pg 6
How do I become a governor?	Pg 7
How governing bodies work	Pg 8
What rights do I have?	Pg 9
What do governors do?	Pg 10
Education in BCP Council	Pg 11
Appendix 1 – Governance Directory of Guidance	Pg 12-14



Thank you for your interest in the role of school governor. Becoming a governor allows you to shape the education children receive and make an important contribution to your local community.

I am sure you have lots of questions about being a school governor and we hope this brief guide will help answer some questions you may have.

Advice and Support is available for schools and governing bodies from the Local Authority. Training is also available for governors (this is free to governors themselves, but their schools do have to pay for training). Some details are set out on page 6.

It is recommended that new governors attend the Essential Governor induction course within one year of becoming a governor.

We look forward to receiving your application.

BCP Governor Services

Email: governor.services@bcpcouncil.gov.uk

Who are Governors?

Governing bodies include a wide range of people with different skills. As a governor you are one of a team the aim of which is:

- To ensure the school provides the best education for all its pupils
- To be responsible and accountable for all major decisions about the school and its future
- To set the school's vision and strategic aims
- To monitor and evaluate performance
- To ensure the school is accountable to those it serves

Responsibilities

Governing bodies have a wide range of powers and responsibilities. They include the following key areas:

- Staffing
- Discipline and attendance
- Oversight of the curriculum
- Use of resources
- Control and use of the premises
- Communication with stakeholders
- Organisational changes

Effective governing bodies have been described as:

'...taking decisions within an agreed policy framework, planning, budgeting to meet priorities. In doing this and monitoring the effects, it assures the quality of education to the children in the school'.



Each governing body is made up of the following types of governors;

Parent Governors:

Elected from the parents of pupils in the school

Staff Governors:

Elected from amongst the staff of the school, one of these places is reserved for the Headteacher

Local Authority Governors:

Appointed by the Local Authority (LA)

Community or Co-opted Governors:

Co-opted by the governing body to represent the wider community

Foundation Governors:

Appointed by the relevant church authorities named in the Instrument of Government

Partnership Governors:

the governing body may only appoint a person as a partnership governor if they believe that they have the skills needed to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school

Associate members:

Associate members are appointed by the governing body to serve on one or more governing body committee

Additional Governors:

Appointed in special circumstances by the LA or Secretary of State

All governors once appointed or elected, share the responsibilities and work as a team.

Individuals are part of the corporate governing body; duties are carried out as part of the team. Governors are not legally liable as individuals.

Governors are NOT responsible for the day-to-day running of the school this is the job of the headteacher and staff.

Where do I fit in?

What can I offer?

- time
- enthusiasm and commitment
- If you are a parent, your own understanding of other parents' concerns, but you don't need to be a parent to be a good school governor
- your local knowledge and experience; as a member of the school's community, will be very valuable; you will have a feel for what is important to people
- your skills; if you happen to have business or organisational skills schools can find these particularly helpful, but they are not a requirement as everyone has something to offer
- Tact and flexibility

What will I get out of being a school governor?

- The knowledge that you are playing a part in improving children's education and supporting the school's staff
- A chance to develop new skills and to practise existing ones, such as chairing meetings, speaking in groups, asking questions, making suggestions and being involved in appointing staff
- A chance to help other members of the team, perhaps because they are new, are not used to committee work or need help in learning about the school and about school governance
- A chance to work as part of a team committed to supporting and improving children's education using a diverse range of skills which you can both contribute to and learn from
- Training and support in order to help you fulfil your responsibilities

What makes a good school governor?

- You care about improving children's educational attainment
- You want to contribute to the local community
- You want to work as part of a team and can value the contribution made by different people
- You are willing to attend training
- You are willing to ask questions
- You are open to ideas and willing to learn
- Commitment to playing your part



Do I need qualifications to be a school governor?

No. No one governor is expected to know it all. The strength of a governing body relies in its ability to attract and rely upon members from a wide variety of backgrounds, share out the duties amongst its members and be able to take decisions as a group. School need volunteers (whether parents or not) with experience of life. However, though not a requirement some governors may have qualifications or professional skills that a governing body might find particularly useful.

What training is available?

Governor Training Events

We offer detailed training on a range of topics

The programme is advertised on-line through the CPD on-line system.

Visit: <https://www.bcpworkforcedevelopment.co.uk/cpd/default.asp> to see what is available.

You can also find governor training events on our 0-19 website:

Visit: <https://www.eduknowledgehub.co.uk/Home.aspx>



Each school's governing body should regularly review the skills members have and identify any gaps to inform training and development plans and future recruitment.

Whole Governing Body Training Sessions can be delivered to individual governing bodies or groups of governing bodies and can be tailored to address the specific needs of your governing body.

Helpline

Support and advice is always available from the Governor Services Team. Email to: governor.services@bcpcouncil.gov.uk

How do I become a governor?

Governors are **elected, appointed or co-opted** to become governors, depending on the type of governor required.

The school or 'Governor Services' will tell you if there are any vacancies and which type of governor the vacancy is for. They will also tell you how to put your name forward for these positions and whether there will need to be an election.

Steps to becoming a Governor

1) *Gather information*

- about being a governor
- about schools looking for governors
- about making your application

2) *Decide which school*

- in which area?
- Primary, secondary or special?

3) *Approach the school or Governor Services*

- do they have vacancies or any coming up?
- Is it possible to visit the school?
- What is the school looking for in a governor?

4) *Decide whether you want to apply*

- Do you like what you see and hear about the school?
- Do you think you are the kind of person they are looking for?

5) *Make an application, either*

- by contacting the Chair of Governors or the headteacher via the school

or

- by completing the application form and returning it to BCP Governor Services for Local Authority Governor vacancies in the first instance or we can redirect you to an appropriate school.



How governing bodies work



A governing body:

- works closely with the headteacher
- makes decisions collectively as a team
- often delegates decision making to committees or to individuals, for example, to the headteacher
- conducts most of its business through meetings, making use of relevant papers and guidance, and advice from the headteacher

Governing bodies have several official positions, including the **Chair**, **Vice-Chair** and the **Clerk** who has an administrative and advisory role. The clerk is appointed by the governing body and cannot be a governor.

Most governing bodies have committees to which they delegate much of the work in the main areas of responsibilities – for example, staffing, finance, curriculum, premises.

Normally all governors will be members of at least one committee.

Individual governors alone do not carry responsibilities and have no power unless the governing body delegates a specific matter to them.

Named Governors

As well as committees, governing bodies often have named governors with specific responsibility to link with the school on certain areas such as Special Educational Needs, Literacy or Numeracy.

In BCP Council we also ask governing bodies to nominate a 'training liaison governor' who liaises with Governor Services on issues of governor training and development.

Governing Body Agendas

The agenda is put together by the clerk, chair of governors and the headteacher. You can ask the clerk or the chair whenever you want to put a topic on the agenda. The chair has the final discretion to decide agenda items. The clerk will tell you how much notice you need to give when you have something for the agenda.

Some matters should not be discussed at full governing body meetings as; there are legal procedures that must be followed, and which might be compromised if the governing body discusses the matter. These are usually matters relating to individual members of staff or pupils for example disciplinary issues or parental complaints. Speak to your clerk, chair of governors or headteacher if you have any doubts about whether a matter can be discussed appropriately.

Confidentiality

Governors are often aware of sensitive and confidential information, for example about staff or pupils. It is essential that this information remains confidential and is not discussed outside governing body meetings.

What rights do I have to help me do the work of a governor?



Can I claim an allowance for expenses from the school?

Governing bodies can pay their members' expenses, if they wish and expenses are often incurred in the performance of governor duties. For example, allowances may be paid to reimburse governors for expenditure they needed to make for:

- childcare expenses
- care arrangements for an elderly or dependent relative
- support with special needs (for example audio equipment)
- support for governors whose first language is not English (for example translations); and
- telephone charges, photocopying, stationery

Governing bodies cannot pay governors for their time or for any loss of earnings whilst they are attending meetings.

Can I have time off work to carry out my duties?

Under employment law, employers must give employees who are school governors reasonable time off to carry out their duties.

The employer and employee must agree on this, so it can require some careful negotiation.

Do I get time off with pay?

Employers may, if they choose, continue to pay school governors for time they take off for their duties but do not have to do so.

How will I keep up to date?

In addition to the governor training events, information and guidance sources are listed in our 'Governance Directory of Guidance' (see Appendix 1 on page 12).

Will I be able to get advice if I need it?

Advice is always available for governors who have questions. You can get advice either in writing or by email.



What do governors actually do?

- Attend full Governing Body meetings. The minimum requirement is three a year, but in practice most governing bodies meet twice per term
- Read papers sent to you before meetings so that you are up to date and aware of items on the agenda
- Contribute to decisions made at meetings
- Visit the school from time to time during the day. It is important to get to know staff and children and how the school works
- Attend school events – sports days, open evenings, fetes and the many other activities that are part of school life
- Take part in committees, working groups or panels for staff recruitment interviews, disciplinary hearings or to deal with complaints
- Go on governor training. A comprehensive programme is organised by Governor Services

How much time does it take?

Governors act as a team and, as such, the amount of time that each of them can give to the role will vary.



Some people will be able and willing to give a lot throughout their time as a governor. Others will find that the amount of time they can give increases or reduces during that period. But if you are serious about helping your school to help children, then you do need to:

- be willing to prepare for meetings: there can be a lot of papers to read
- attend meetings: the governing body must meet at least three times per year, but in practice most governing bodies meet twice per term. You will also be asked to serve on at least one committee. How often this meets will vary, but it is not unusual for one committee to meet twice a term
- be able to get to meetings which, quite often, can be during the evening but which may be early or during the day. This varies from school to school
- Participate

If you cannot prepare for, and attend meetings regularly, you will not be able to support the school effectively.

Education in BCP Council

There are 31 secondary schools in BCP Council, including two all through schools and five special schools. They include mixed, grammar and single sex provision. Seventeen cater for pupils up to the age of 18. All but two of our secondary schools are academies.

There are 85 schools for primary age children in BCP Council. As well as schools catering for the full primary age range there are infant and junior schools with varying age ranges. Some include provision for nursery age children. All but 10 primary schools, two Infants and one Junior school are academies.

There are 7 special schools in BCP, catering for pupils with special needs.

Everyday 50.000 children attend schools in BCP.

Local authorities have a strong strategic role as champions for parents and families, for vulnerable pupils and for educational excellence. Under existing legislation, the local authority has a duty to challenge and offer support to all schools and intervene in any maintained school that falls within either OFSTED category of concern.



The proportion of good or outstanding schools in BCP Council continues to improve. By the Spring of 2020 and prior to lock down, 91.1% pupils were in good or better schools, compared to 84.3% nationally, ranking BCP top in the SW region and 40th out of 161 Local Authorities.

In 2019 results at the end of all Key Stages continued to be higher than national averages.

The LA has no powers to intervene directly in academies but, through the arrangements within the current Education Improvement Strategy, seeks to ensure that the LA view of standards achieved in each school is known to Headteachers and Chairs of Governors.

Through engagement with our local Education Improvement Board, local and sub regional teaching school alliances and the South-West Regional Schools Commissioner's School Improvement Partnership Board, the LA is able to share any views on school standards and effectiveness with the appropriate responsible body.

Governance Directory of Guidance

Useful links organised into the following sections

General education sites

Sites specifically for governors

Online Learning

Governance in and beyond schools

General Education sites

Brown Jacobson

Offer range of education advisory and HR services, underpinned by legal expertise.

<https://www.brownejacobson.com/>

DFE (Department for Education)

The DfE website is the central source of information on education policy.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>

Documents specific to governance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-governance-update>

Independent Thinking

Education network that provides education tools to help people think for themselves. It also has some leading education speakers to hire. <http://www.independentthinking.co.uk/>

Ofsted

Here you will find inspection reports for schools, the framework for inspection and evaluation schedule. www.ofsted.gov.uk

Optimus Education

This organisation provides support and professional development to schools and early years settings. Organised within seven hubs, Governance is within the Leadership and Management Hub. www.optimus-education.com

SEND Gateway

The SEND Gateway is an online portal offering free information, resources and training for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). While many resources are aimed at educational professionals, governors will find some helpful material, particularly in relation to the SEN reforms. <http://www.sendgateway.org.uk/>

Sites specifically for governors

National Governors Association (NGA)

The National Governors' Association (NGA) is the representative body for school governors in England. An independent organisation, their aim is to improve the well-being of children and young people by promoting high standards in all schools and improving the effectiveness of their governing bodies.

www.nga.org.uk

NCTL licensed programmes for Governors

Regional organisations are licensed to offer the Chairs of Governors' Leadership Development Programme, Clerks' Development Programme and training workshops for governing body members.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/licensees-professional-development-for-school-governors/licensees-professional-development-for-school-governors#south>

These organisations offer a range of training for school governors and clerks eg: <http://www.bestpracticenet.co.uk/cld> Clerks' Development Programme for new or experienced clerks to governing bodies. If a local authority or group of settings would like to arrange this bespoke training for 8 people or more contact the Governor Services team using the link above, or call 0117 920 9200

Governors' Agenda

This newsletter is written by David Sassoon who is an education consultant, clerk to school governing bodies and principal at Schools' Support Services Ltd. To get in touch, please email david@governorsagenda.co.uk. Download the newsletter free at the website.

www.governorsagenda.co.uk

Information for School and College Governors (ISCG)

ISCG provides practical advice, impartial and up-to-date information on independent appeals for both school admissions and exclusions and for all matters concerning school governance.

www.governors.uk.com

Governance Handbook [DfE]

For School Governors, clerks and individuals involved directly in the governance of maintained schools, academies and Free Schools in England

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook>

Governor Mark

Governor Mark is a national award. It is a kite mark which provides external evaluation of the quality of governance in a school. The Governor Mark Standards Document is freely available to any governing body for use as a comprehensive health check.

<http://glmpartnership.org/governor-mark/>

The Key

The key provides information in response to question from school governors.

<https://schoolgovernors.thekeysupport.com/>

National Leaders of Governance

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-leaders-of-governance-a-guide-for-potentialapplicants>

School Governors One-Stop-Shop (SGOSS)

The School Governors' One-Stop Shop (SGOSS) is an independent charity dedicated to recruiting volunteers to serve on school governing bodies across England. The service is free to schools and Local Authorities. The website aims to show what being a governor involves. www.sgoss.org.uk

Adamson Books

Information for School Governors, Headteachers and Support Staff. These books that provide reliable information and independent advice that is concise and easy to use. We have purchased a copy of the handbook for 2016.

www.adamsonbooks.com

Clerk to Governors

This is a bank of articles, extracts, links and resources for governors, clerks and anyone with an interest in school governance, to save time and keep you up to date.

www.clerktogovernors.co.uk

On-Line learning

Modern Governor

Modern Governor is a product within the Learning Pool portfolio that seeks to address this need. It is designed to help School Governors develop their skills through e-learning at a time, place and pace that suits their needs.

www.moderngovernor.com

GEL

Governors E-Learning (GEL) is a collaborative approach to governor training, The aim is to provide accessible training online, enabling governors to access a broad range of modules at their own pace and convenience. www.elc-gel.org

Governors Virtual Office

Governors Virtual Office is a web-based tool designed specifically for school Governing Bodies. It helps improve access to key information for governors, assists the work of the clerk, and provides process workflows to help governors fulfil routine tasks more efficiently.

www.schoolleadershipsystems.com

Governance in and Beyond Schools

NCOGS

National Co-ordinators of Governor Services is the national committee representing local authority providers of services to school governors. The website contains many useful downloadable resources and materials for governors as well as COGS www.ncogs.org.uk

Office for Public Management

An independent centre for the development of public services; improvement; leadership development and research. www.opm.co.uk

Centre for Public Scrutiny

The Centre for Public Scrutiny promotes the value of scrutiny and accountability in modern and effective government and supports non-executives in their scrutiny role

<http://www.cfps.org.uk/>

National Archives

The website is managed by the National Archives on behalf of HM Government publishing all UK Legislation. All legislation (excluding draft) can be found on this site.

www.legislation.gov.uk

National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)

Website of National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) is a useful sub-site which collects a wide range of documents or sharing between local authorities and others interested in education. www.nfer.ac.uk