



Parent Governors' Guidance

All Diocese of Ely Multi-Academy Trust (DEMAT) Academy local governing bodies have to have parent governors.

Anyone who has parental responsibility for a pupil on the academy roll at the time of election can stand for election and can vote in the election. The term of office for a parent governor is specified in the academy's Scheme of Delegation. In most academies the term is 4 years. A parent governor can stand down at any time. A parent governor must resign from the local governing body if he / she no longer has a child attending the academy.

DEMAT has delegated the election process to the headteacher of the academy and provides guidance on election procedures.

Why become a parent governor?

Parents who have a child at the academy and who take an active interest in the education of **all children** at the academy should consider becoming a parent governor. They should not take on this role because they have a particular concern about the education of an individual child.

Parents may have a useful skill such as an expertise in finance that can be useful to the local governing body. It is useful for parents to talk to other parent governors to find out what they think about the role and what is really involved before deciding if the role is one which they would like to take on. *What have they found challenging? What have they found rewarding?*

What will parent governors have to do?

- take an active interest in education
- give time to find out about your academy
- give time to learn about the role by attending induction training
- attend meetings throughout the year (usually in the evening but depends on each individual academy)
- abide by the Code of Conduct and confidentiality
- undergo the pre-appointment checks by reading and signing a Declaration of Eligibility form and completing a register of pecuniary interest.

The Strategic Role

The role of a parent governor is essentially the same as that of a governor from any other category. **Some** of the ways in which governors work together strategically:

- monitoring the academies' performance and working to raise standards and promote pupil welfare
- ensuring that the academy is improving the achievement and attainment of all children
- making sure that special needs are properly catered for
- dealing with disciplinary issues of pupils and staff
- appointing the headteacher

- monitoring work-life balance of the staff and headteacher
- setting the budget
- helping to formulate policies
- accountability to parents by ensuring they have the information they are legally entitled to
- dealing with problems and agreeing solutions
- determining curriculum policy
- ensuring the academy has sound self-evaluation processes in place

Collective Responsibility

All governors have equal status. They act collectively to support the academy strategically. They participate in and contribute in shared decisions. Once decisions have been made even if a governor does not personally agree with these they must act collectively to support these decisions in a united way.

Critical Friend

The local governing body is often described as a 'critical friend'. They should support the academy but also be prepared to question why decisions have been made and request information about the academy to help them in their monitoring role.

The Headteacher's Operational Role

Parent governors and other categories of governors may become involved in other aspects of academy life. They may visit the academy to help in various capacities such as hearing children read. What governors must not do is get involved with operational decisions. The headteacher is responsible for the day-to-day running of the academy.

Sometimes it can be difficult to decide where the strategic role ends and the operational one begins. There is a wealth of information available to governors to help them understand their role.

Diplomacy and Confidentiality

The role requires diplomacy, adherence to a DEMAT Scheme of Delegation and particularly confidentiality.

The role can be a difficult one at times. A parent may have to wear two hats. One when raising issues about their own children as a parent and not a governor, with the class teacher or headteacher and the other as a parent governor raising issues at local governing body meetings that represent a parent perspective.

The Playground

Being a parent governor and being in contact with other parents in the playground before and after academy can mean that a parent governor has to be particularly careful regarding issues of confidentiality and professionalism. It is important to keep the role of governor separate from personal feelings when given information about individuals. Similarly, a parent governor may be involved in discussions of a confidential nature during the course of a local governing body meeting and these discussions may concern a particular individual. Names would not normally be disclosed at meetings but inevitably at some time a parent governor may become aware about issues surrounding an individual child or member of staff. Confidentiality is of the utmost importance in these circumstances.

A parent governor may be involved in a disciplinary case and would have to declare an interest to other members of the local governing body if they had had contact with a child or teacher involved with the case. Parent governors need to be familiar with the academy's complaints procedure.

Communicating with Parents and Representing Parents

A parent governor has a duty to communicate concerns and feelings expressed by parents to other members of the local governing body. However, a parent governor is not a delegate who attends meetings with instructions on how to vote on any particular issue. A parent governor is a representative parent and should vote on issues at meetings in the best interests of the academy and according to his/her own conscience.

If a particular issue is raised and brought to the attention of a parent governor, this should be referred to the whole local governing body to discuss and decide collectively how to act. A parent governor takes account of what parents are thinking and then makes a decision about what he/she feels is in the best interests of the academy.

Communication between governors, parents, pupils and teachers is very important. Some of the ways for this to happen are:

- photographs of all governors may be placed in a prominent place in the academy
- newsletters may be sent regularly to parents
- an annual parents' meeting (no longer a statutory requirement)
- attending Academy Council meetings
- meeting parents at academy events
- meeting teachers and pupils on academy visits

Induction and Support

One of the most important ways to ensure that governors are clear about their role is for them to receive good, sound induction as soon as possible following their appointment. This should include general induction to the role by attending induction training, and in-academy induction to their own local governing body from the headteacher, the chair of governors and a mentor governor.

DEMAT strongly advise that parent governors attend induction training as soon as possible after their election. The local authority runs countywide courses developed using DfE materials, details of which can be found in the welcome packs on the Cambridgeshire Education Portal and in the *Governor Training and Development Programme*. This training is free of charge to individual governors whose academies subscribe to the Traded Governor Services Team (reference Service Level Agreement). To suit governors' varying circumstances, there is a choice of either daytime or evening courses.

It is for individual local governing bodies to decide whether to reimburse governors for expenses incurred in the course of carrying out their role.

For further information about the role of a local governing body please contact DEMAT.