

Becoming a School Governor

Why You Become a School Governor?

"Being a governor is about being a critical and supportive friend to the school. People imagine that governors are not people like them, but that's a misconception. Everyone has experience of education, so everyone can make a valuable contribution to the school."

Dona Henriques, School Governor in Newham

What are the personal benefits of being a school governor?

- Being a governor is an enormously challenging and rewarding opportunity. The personal benefits can be summarised as follows:
- A sense of satisfaction through knowing children will benefit from your efforts.
- The opportunity to develop new skills and to strengthen existing ones.
- The opportunity to work with a wide range of people from a variety of social, cultural and religious backgrounds.
- The opportunity to gain an understanding of, and experience in, key areas such as finance, personnel, target setting and strategic planning.
- The opportunity to gain an awareness of the education system as a whole.
- Through solving problems ranging from finance to site management; human resources to marketing; pupil welfare to curriculum development, every governor is guaranteed to broaden their skills and knowledge in some ways and this can be enhanced through training offered by local education authorities. All decisions are made with the consensus of the whole governing body, which brings into play the softer skills of teamwork, communication and tolerance.
- There is the very real sense of adding value and giving children the best possible opportunity in life as well as the additional opportunity for personal and career development cannot be underestimated.

What is the role of school governors?

School governors make collective decisions as part of the governing body whose primary function is to help raise the educational standards and performance of a school by supporting the work of the head teacher and staff. Governors make important decisions on how a school will be run. The governing body is answerable to parents and the wider community.

Some of the things expected of governors include:

- Promoting high standards of achievement
- Planning the school's long-term future
- Setting the school's aims, values and ethos
- Budgetary allocation and control
- Appointing senior staff

If you have any of the other following skills, these will also add value:

- Decision Making
- Problem Solving
- Strategic Planning
- Team working
- Marketing
- Health and Safety
- Finance
- IT
- Project Management
- Communications
- HR
- Legal Knowledge
- Languages
- Art and Design
- Science and Technology
- Engineering

Who can be a school governor?

You may have few questions and the answers are given below:

Q: *"I'm too young / too old to be a governor. I have nothing to offer."*

A: The only age restriction is to be 18+

Nothing can be further from the truth than that young people have nothing to offer. At least one generation nearer in age to pupils than many governors, they have recent first-hand experience of the education system and are still in touch with what is important to young people. In addition, their skills learnt at work or university will be relevant and up-to-date. It is equally true that the majority of older people will have acquired work and life skills and experiences, which will add value to a governing body.

Q: *"I can't be a governor, I don't have any children of my own."*

A: Only parent governors are required to be parents.

The most important quality is the desire to help children receive the best possible standard of education, and so enable them to realise their expectations and aspirations. You do not have to be a parent, know about education, or have specific skills to be a school governor.

Q: *"Governing bodies will see me as an outsider."*

A: You will be welcomed for your skills and play a vital role.

You should be willing to challenge assumptions you may not agree with, to work in a team, to encourage and promote innovation and to make a full contribution to the decision making process. Thereafter, and as long as you are over 18, you will be welcome regardless of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, sex, disability, marital status, sexual orientation or religion. It is in fact critical that volunteers represent all age groups and the diversity of the communities in which the schools are situated.

Q: *"I just don't have the time."*

A: Average monthly commitment is 6 – 8 hours per month.

This can vary by school and may be dependent on the school's circumstances. On average, however, 6 - 8 hours per month during the school term time will allow you to attend the full governor body meetings, participate in one of the committees that support the governing body, and do the necessary preparatory reading. The ideal commitment to being a governor is 4 years, but as a volunteer and if your circumstances change, you can resign or be re-elected.

To find out more about being a governor, please also look at our booklet "Becoming a School Governor – What's it all about" or look at Newham web site: www.npw.so

Do you want to be a school governor?

For an application form and further information please contact the School office or contact:

NPW Governor Services

Francis House, 760 Barking Road
London E13 9PJ

Telephone: 0208249 6932

Email: irfan.mustafa@npw.so