



Becoming a

SCHOOL GOVERNOR

for people from all backgrounds

January 2018





BECOMING A SCHOOL GOVERNOR

Every school funded or grant aided by government is managed by a Board of Governors that works alongside the school Principal and senior staff to meet the educational needs of the school's pupils.

The role of the Board of Governors is to make sure that the school provides its pupils with a good education. The Board of Governors with the Principal set the plans and policies of the school, appoint school staff, manage the spending of the school budget and set and monitor standards within the school, all with the aim of driving school improvement.



The Board of Governors of a school has an important strategic role to play in the management of the school and to take corporate decisions in relation to their statutory functions. More information on the Board of Governors' roles including their statutory responsibilities can be found in the DE publication, a Guide to Governor Roles and Responsibilities, www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/guide-governor-roles-and-responsibilities.

A school's Board of Governors is made up of parent and teacher members, members representing the owners or former owners of the school and members of the general public with an interest in education, who are appointed by the Department of Education or the Education Authority. Although nominated by different groups, all governors have the same role and voting rights.



You can watch a promotional video on the role of a school governor at www.esags.tv/governor-support/



Who can be a school governor?

You must be over 18 to be a school governor – you don't have to be a parent with a child at the school and you don't need previous experience or qualifications. Training on the key roles and responsibilities of school governors will be provided.

Important qualities for being a school governor are enthusiasm, commitment, the ability to work in a team and a desire to ensure children receive the best possible education. Governors are expected to abide by the Seven Principles of Public Life – see Annex A.

A typical Board of Governors should be representative of people from the local community and will have a range of different skills, knowledge and experience. Governors do not need to be educational experts but should be supportive of the ethos of the school. The business of the school is progressed by the whole Board of Governors working together as a team in the best interests of the children and young people attending the school.

Governors are volunteers, they need a strong commitment to the role and to improving educational outcomes for children and young people. Every governor is expected to contribute to the conduct of school business and every governor can expect to learn something new. Being a school governor is an opportunity to help others and to develop skills.



We welcome applications for school governor positions from all sections of the community regardless of background, religious belief, gender, disability, ethnic origin, political opinion, age, marital status, sexual orientation, or whether or not you have dependants.





Who cannot be a school governor?

You will not be eligible to be a school governor if:

- You already hold 3 school governor posts (unless there are exceptional circumstances approved by the Department of Education);
- You are adjudged bankrupt or under a composition arrangement with your creditors or you are subject to a Bankruptcy Restrictions Order (BRO);
- You are applying for a post in a school where you are employed;
- You are applying for a post in a school and you have a financial interest in the supply of goods or services to that school;
- You are applying for a post in a school which is registered by law as a company limited by guarantee, and you are disqualified by law from being a company director. (NB All grant maintained integrated schools and some voluntary grammar schools are registered as companies limited by guarantee);
- You have been convicted within the previous 5 years or any time thereafter of any offence with a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of not less than 3 months without the option of a fine; or
- You are applying for a post in a school which is registered as a charity and you are disqualified under Article 86 of the Charities Act (NI) 2008 from being a trustee of that charity.



Conflicts of Interest

Anyone offered a school governor appointment must declare any conflicts of interest that might arise. Conflicts of interest are not automatically a barrier to an appointment. However, real, perceived and potential conflicts of interest must be considered to ensure confidence in the independence and impartiality of the Board of Governors and your position as a member. A conflict of interest could arise if you:

- are a relative of an existing governor or a member of staff of the school;
- have a child registered at the school; or
- are a teacher or the Principal of another school in the same community.

How much time does it take?

Boards of Governors are required to meet once per school term but in practice meet more often, perhaps monthly, depending on the size of the school.

You may also be asked to join committees covering different areas for example recruitment and selection or finance. A governor is appointed in a voluntary unpaid capacity for a four year term of office and can resign at any time. Travel expenses incurred may also be claimed through the school on which a governor serves.

Which schools need governors?

Controlled Schools are under the management of the Education Authority and include nursery, primary, secondary, special and grammar schools including a small number of Irish medium and integrated schools. Most controlled primary schools were originally set up by the Church of Ireland, the Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

Catholic Maintained Schools are nursery, primary and secondary schools under the control of the Council for Catholic Maintained schools.

Voluntary Grammar Schools are self-governing schools catering for pupils aged 11 to 18.

Grant Maintained Integrated Schools are self-governing integrated primary and secondary schools.

Irish Medium Schools are self-governing primary and secondary schools in which pupils are taught via the medium of the Irish language.

Other Maintained Schools are self-governing primary schools. Only a small number remain.

You can find out more about the different types of schools on our website or by calling the contact numbers on page 6.



How can I become a school governor?

To become a Department of Education (DE) or an Education Authority (EA) governor you need to complete an application form.

DE selects governors for the Boards of Governors of:

- controlled nursery, grammar and special schools;
- catholic maintained schools;
- Irish medium schools;
- other maintained schools;
- voluntary grammar schools; and
- grant maintained integrated schools.

The EA selects governors for the Boards of Governors of:

- controlled schools;
- catholic maintained schools; and
- other maintained schools.

If you are interested in becoming a school governor you can:

- download an application form from the website; or
- request an application form from DE or the EA

Application forms are available online at:

www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/school-governor-appointments

or

www.eani.org.uk/school-governor-applications

Alternatively you can e-mail or telephone the Department of Education or the Education Authority. Our contact details are set out overleaf.

Department of Education

E-mail: govapps@education-ni.gov.uk

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE TEAM:	
Lorna-Jayne Fletcher	(028) 9127 9404
Lorraine Coulter	(028) 9127 9901
Joanne Pickford	(028) 9127 9385
Sibeal Cromie	(028) 9127 9612
Steven Johnston	(028) 9127 9892

Education Authority

E-mail: govsupport@eani.org.uk

Antrim Office	Karen White Education Authority, Antrim Office, 17 Lough Rd, Antrim BT41 4DH	(028) 9448 2213
Armagh Office	Lorraine Livingstone Education Authority, Armagh Office, 3 Charlemont Place, The Mall, Armagh BT61 9AX	(028) 3751 2504
Belfast/Dundonald Office	Paula Maguire Education Authority, Belfast Office, 40 Academy Street, Belfast, BT1 2NQ	(028) 9056 4112
Omagh Office	Teresa McCrory Education Authority, Omagh Office, 1 Hospital Road, Omagh, BT79 0AW	(028) 8241 1544

The information contained in this document can be translated, and/or made available in alternative formats, on request.



Annex A

The Seven Principles of Public Life

The Seven Principles of Public Life apply to anyone who works as a public office-holder. This includes all those who are elected or appointed to public office, nationally and locally, and all people appointed to work in the civil service, local government, the police, courts and probation services, Non Departmental Public Bodies, and in the health, education, social and care services. All public office-holders are both servants of the public and stewards of public resources. The Principles also have application to all those in other sectors delivering public services.

- Selflessness** - Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
- Integrity** - Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
- Objectivity** - Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
- Accountability** - Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
- Openness** - Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
- Honesty** - Holders of public office should be truthful.
- Leadership** - Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

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