

Being a Parent Governor



Parents & Carers are important people to have on a governing body because, alongside the staff, no one is more concerned with the quality of the teaching and learning provision of the school. Having your child's best interests at heart means that you'll also have the school's best interests at heart, which makes you committed to the school's continuous improvement for the benefit of all students. The aim of this briefing paper is to offer advice to new / prospective parent/carer governors on their specific role and suggest ways of handling some of the tricky situations which may arise.

A Parent/Carer Governor is:

- ✓ well placed to understand other parents' views
- ✓ to remind the governing body how matters being discussed affect parents
- ✓ Individuals! How you vote on any decision is up to you
- ✓ in a good position to help the governing body to communicate effectively with parents/carers.
- ✓ equal in status to all other governors

A Parent/Carer Governor is not:

- ✗ expected to gather the views of other parents and take them to the governing body.
- ✗ expected to represent the interests of every parent/carer.
- ✗ a link between parents and the governing body.
- ✗ expected to vote as instructed by other parents.

What are the good bits about being a parent/carer governor?

- ❖ You have a very privileged and responsible role.
- ❖ You can make a difference, not only for your child, but for all students.
- ❖ You have the opportunity to make a difference for other parents and carers, and to influence the way in which the school works with them.
- ❖ You will learn a lot and develop new skills.

How to fulfil your role

- ❖ Attend governing body meetings regularly and play an active role in committees and decision-making.
- ❖ Learn all you can about the school.
- ❖ Consider how the governing body communicate with parents/carers? Could you help them to improve links?
- ❖ How accessible is the school – how easy is it for parents/carers to go into school to discuss things with the headteacher or teachers? Could you give feedback to help the school to be more open and welcoming?
- ❖ How accessible are the governors – do parents/carers ever get the opportunity to meet with governors; do they know how to get in touch with the chair of governors if they need to? Could you encourage the governing body to be more visible?
- ❖ Learn how the school handles complaints and read the complaints policy. If another parent/carer approaches you with a complaint, advise them to speak to the headteacher.
- ❖ Be approachable to other parents/carers, but make sure you are clear about your role.
- ❖ Always represent the school positively.
- ❖ As a governor you are one of a group and must never act alone.

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- ❖ Always support the decisions of the full governing body. Have your say on decisions in meetings and vote in the way you wish; but then support the outcomes of votes – even if you disagree with them.
- ❖ Always observe confidentiality. You will get to know a lot of highly sensitive and confidential information – don't discuss it with anyone who is not a governor. Remember, a governor can be suspended for serious breaches of confidentiality.

How you can help individual parents/carers

From time to time, you may be approached by other parents/carers asking for help or wanting to make a complaint about something the school is or isn't doing.

- ❖ Make it clear you can't act for the governing body.
- ❖ Don't raise expectations that the school will "put it right" – there may be underlying issues or background that you don't know about.
- ❖ Keep an open mind – there are at least two sides to every story.
- ❖ You may need to explain why the governing body has made a decision in a professional manner.

What to do if you experience a conflict between being a parent/carer and being a governor

This can happen – especially if you think the governing body is making decisions which you feel will adversely affect your child(ren).

- ❖ If a difficulty arises, take a step back and think things through as objectively as you can.
- ❖ If you are concerned, talk to the Headteacher or to the Chair of Governors.
- ❖ Make sure you don't break confidentiality when discussing your concerns outside governing body meetings.

Where to get help, advice, and support from

- ❖ other governors.
- ❖ the Headteacher.
- ❖ the Chair of Governors.
- ❖ the Clerk to the governing body.
- ❖ Speak to your governor mentor or "buddy" to help you through the first few months.
- ❖ You can get information from Hackney Education's Governance website about what being a Governor entails. To find out more, click [here](#)
- ❖ Phone the Hackney Governance Service team on 020 8820 7369 / or email governorservices@hackney.gov.uk.

And finally...

Don't be discouraged if at first everything seems confusing and difficult to get to grips with. Most new governors feel this way. Nobody expects you to know everything immediately; it can take a full year to begin to see how the cycle of governing body business works.

What to do next

If you are interested or would like to find out more about becoming a Parent/ Carer governor at Stormont House, some of our Governors will be happy to answer any questions you have on Wednesday 09 October 2024 at 4pm. This will be hosted online using Teams – please call Kitty Kaur on 020 8985 4245 to request the link.

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