

Why do we need a Governing Body?

The day to day management and operations of the Federation and its schools, St Martin's Church of England Primary (CEP) School and Seabrook CEP School, are the responsibility of our Executive Headteacher, Mrs Carter, and her team of staff. However, there is an additional group of people who come together as the Governing Body of the Federation and its schools. I would like to explain **why do we need a Governing Body?**

Let's start at the top – **the government**. We live in a democratic society which is not without faults but at least we, the people, have the opportunity to take part in the process of appointing our government. The government governs the country through a number of departments headed up by government ministers and administered by civil servants. Through these departments, the elected government implements the plans it described in its election manifesto. The **Department for Education (DfE)** is responsible for education and children's services in England. Its aim is to achieve a highly educated society in which opportunity is equal for children and young people, no matter what their background or family circumstances. In order to achieve this aim, the DfE, under the direction of the Secretary of State for Education, introduces policies and practices that have to be implemented by all schools. Recent examples include the new National Curriculum, pupil premium funding and the PE initiative for primary schools. The DfE provides the funding for schools, which, for maintained schools, is delegated to the **local authorities**.

Our local authority is Kent County Council (KCC). KCC has responsibility, delegated by the government, for many aspects of education and children services such as childcare, adoption and fostering and child protection. Its responsibilities for maintained schools include, determining the number of school places available in each school and the admissions policy, term dates, free school meals, school attendance and educational support services including training for governors.

The two schools in our Federation, Seabrook CEP School and St Martin's CEP School, are described as **voluntary-controlled maintained schools**. This means that the schools receive from KCC the services as described above and the majority of their funding. In addition, they are Church of England schools and as such are required to follow the practices determined by the **Board of Education of the Diocese of Canterbury**. These include the application of Christian values and teachings in all aspects of school life and the celebration of key events in the Christian calendar throughout the year such as Christmas, Mothers' Day, Easter and Harvest Festival.

So how does the government ensure that all its policies and practices are being carried out correctly by each and every school and that the money that we, the people, provide through our taxes for education is being used appropriately? How does the local authority know that its schools are carrying out its directives? How does the Church of England know that its schools are following its practices? How do you as parents and carers know that your child is receiving the best possible education?

There are several ways in which every aspect of the work of a school can be checked and reported on. At the highest level there is the **Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)**. Ofsted regulates and inspects services which care for children and young people, and those providing education and skills for learners of all ages. Ofsted is independent of the government, is impartial and reports directly to Parliament. Ofsted is led by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI). Every school is inspected by Ofsted on average every three to five years. There is a very detailed and extensive inspection framework that is used by inspectors when making judgements about a school. The inspection reports for all schools are published and available on the Ofsted website.

For maintained schools the local authority carries out some scrutiny of the work of the school. For example, every three to five years each school will have a compliance audit undertaken by the local authority. This process looks critically at how a school manages its resources and how

adequately and effectively it carries out its responsibilities for financial planning and control, procurement, data protection and health and safety. In addition, each school is allocated an improvement adviser who will visit and report on the school to KCC several times each year.

For Church of England schools, the designated diocese carries out an inspection on average every five years to ensure that the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is appropriate.

All schools are required to publish annually their performance data such as attendance and achievement. These data can be viewed via the websites of the school, the local authority and the DfE.

These major assessments of every school are very detailed but infrequent. So, on a day to day basis, who is responsible for ensuring that the school is carrying out its duties correctly and effectively? **This is the role of governing bodies.**

The DfE has determined that in all schools in England **the governing bodies are the strategic leaders of the schools.** The Education Act 2002 states that the purpose of maintained school governing bodies is to 'conduct the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement at the school'.

Governing bodies have three core strategic functions:

1. Ensuring the clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.
2. Holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils and the performance management of staff.
3. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

The Federation has a very committed and multi-skilled governing body that is responsible for both St Martin's School and Seabrook School. There are 13 governors and several associate governors including three foundation governors agreed by the Diocese, a local authority governor, governors elected by our staff and by our parents as well as co-opted governors who bring particular skills and expertise. A brief description of the background of each governor is available on the schools' websites. The Governing Body meets as a full team at least six times in the year. In addition, the Governing Body is divided up into small teams with specific responsibilities for monitoring key areas, such as pupil engagement, pupil behaviour, expectations of pupils, pupil performance, early years transition, health and safety, financial management, staff performance management, parental involvement and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As Chair of the Governing Body, I meet on a weekly basis with Mrs Carter to discuss the on-going work of the Federation and its two schools.

Governors attend many of the school events and very much welcome the opportunity to talk to you and to listen to your comments and ideas.

In the meantime, if you wish to discuss any matters with me please contact me by writing to me c/o the school office in either of our schools.

With very best wishes,

Anita Ellerby

Chair of the Governing Body of St Martin's and Seabrook CEP Schools