

ELECTION OF A PARENT GOVERNOR – GUIDANCE & PROCEDURES (2019)

GUIDANCE AND ADVICE FOR SCHOOLS AND CANDIDATES

1. All Governors regardless of their category (LA, Foundation, Staff, Parent) are elected or appointed with one common purpose – to govern and make decisions in the best interest of pupils.
2. Elected Governors are **representatives not delegates** of their stakeholder group. This means they may contribute to discussions as a representative and put forward the views of parents but they may vote as they see fit as an individual.
3. Having Board members who bring different perspectives and knowledge to the Board strengthens Governance and diversity should be encouraged.
4. The required number of Parent Governors on a Governing Board, will be set out in the Instrument of Government (for maintained Schools) or the Articles of Association (for Academies).
5. When a vacancy arises, a School must inform all parents and seek nominations, even if the existing Parent Governor is willing to stand again.
6. A Parent Governor is defined as a person who is elected as a member of the Governing Board of the school, by parents of registered pupils at the school, and who is a parent at the time s/he is elected. "Parent" includes any individual who has or has had parental responsibility for, or cares or has cared for, a child or young person under the age of 19.
7. A person is disqualified from standing for election or appointment as a Parent Governor if s/he is:
 - An elected member of the local education authority; or
 - Paid to work at the school for more than 500 hours in any consecutive 12 month period (at the time of the election or appointment); or
 - Subject to any of the disqualifications under the Regulations.
8. Elections for Parent Governors must be organised by the 'appropriate authority' which must take reasonably practicable steps to ensure that all parents of registered pupils at the school are:
 - Informed of the vacancy and the fact that it is required to be filled by nomination and if necessary, election;

- Informed that they are entitled to stand as a candidate (self-nominate) and vote in any subsequent election; and
- Given the opportunity to do so.

9. For community, community special, maintained nursery and voluntary controlled schools, the appropriate authority is the local authority (LA).

For voluntary aided, foundation or foundation special schools and academies the appropriate authority is the Governing Board.

10. Where the LA is the appropriate authority, it is common for the responsibility for parent elections to be delegated to the Headteacher, who commonly acts as the 'returning officer'.

In some cases, the school may use the Clerk to Governors or appoint another member of staff as returning officer. Where the appropriate authority is the Governing Board, the Headteacher, Chair or Clerk to Governors may be the returning officer.

11. It is good practice to have an agreed, documented procedure in place so that it is clear to all parents what the process is and that it is transparent and objective.

12. It is recommended that the school website give details of the process and the provided clarity regarding the expectations of Governors.

13. The Regulations provide an entitlement for parents to vote by post or delivery by hand.

14. Schools may provide the opportunity to vote by electronic means. Use of such a system must not preclude voting by post or delivery by hand but should be an extension of the process. Whilst this is permissible under the Regulations Governing Boards will need to be satisfied that the integrity of the secret ballot is maintained. The key things to think about when considering opting for an electronic voting system include:

- A cross-referencing mechanism to account for those parents voting online and those voting by paper, in order to avoid multiple entries from individuals
- An authentication procedure to ensure that only those eligible to vote, actually do so and can only do so once

- Data protection - the school would have to be clear about how personal information may be stored and used by such a system and ensure that this is made clear to parents.
- School resources in terms of set up, maintenance and staffing costs.

15. In the event that there are fewer candidates than vacancies, the Governing Board must appoint a parent of a registered pupil at the school. Although, if it is not possible to do so (for example where no other parent wishes to be appointed), the Governing Board may appoint the parent of a former registered pupil, or a parent of a child under or of compulsory school age.

ELECTION PROCEDURE

1. When a vacancy arises a letter should be sent to all parents notifying them of the vacancy and requesting nominations. The invitation and nomination form could also be placed on the school website.
2. The letter should include information regarding eligibility. It should indicate the closing date for nominations, which will be not less than 10 school days from the date of issue. Candidates should be invited to submit a statement in support of their nomination, which should be no longer than 250 words.
3. The Governing Board may ask for parents with particular skills/experience to put their name forwards for election. This does not preclude any other member of the parent body from standing for election.
4. Parents may self-nominate but if a parent wishes to nominate another parent, they should seek their approval before submitting the nomination.
5. Where the number of candidates nominated is equal to or fewer than the number of vacancies, then all those nominated will be elected unopposed. If too few parents stand for election to fill all the vacancies, the Governing Board will appoint Parent Governors to the vacancy or vacancies in accordance with the School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012.
6. If there are more nominations than vacancies, a secret ballot will be conducted. Letters, ballot papers and 2 return envelopes will be sent to all parents.

The letters will set out that:

- a. All parents of registered pupils are entitled to vote. Depending on the number of vacancies, parents may be asked to vote for more than one candidate. Each parent can submit one ballot form, regardless of the number of children they have attending the school;
 - b. The closing date and time for receipt of ballot papers, which will be no less than 5 school days;
 - c. If applicable, the candidates' personal statements will be enclosed
7. In order to ensure confidentiality, parents will be provided with two envelopes. They will be asked to enclose the completed ballot paper in an unmarked envelope, then enclose this in the 2nd envelope and write their name (or the name of their child) on the envelope and sign it. This is to allow the returning officer to check eligibility to vote.
8. A ballot box will be provided in the school [reception area/foyer], and parents will also be given the option to vote by post. No arrangements will be made for proxy voting.
9. Returned envelopes must be locked away unopened until the closing date.
10. At the closing date for return of ballot papers, the returning officer will count the votes in front of a witness. Candidates and Governors will be invited to witness this, but there is no requirement for either to attend. The returning officer is responsible for determining whether a "spoiled" ballot should be included. The outcome of the vote will be decided by the simple majority vote system. In the event of a tie, there should be a recount. If this does not produce a clear result, the returning officer should, in the presence of the witness, draw lots.
11. The Headteacher or Clerk to Governors will inform all candidates individually about the result of the ballot. Other parents will be notified of the result via school newsletter and/or website.
12. The ballot papers will be retained securely for six months in case the election result is challenged.
13. The Clerking Service at Trust GS must be informed of the date of appointment along with the name, address and email of any new Governors. The School must submit a DBS check request within 21 days of appointment.

Appendices.

SAMPLE LETTERS

These letters are intended as model templates and can be adapted as appropriate by the school.

SAMPLE LETTER TO SEEK NOMINATIONS

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

The Governing Board is responsible for both the conduct of the school and for promoting high standards. The Governing Board carries out its role by ensuring the vision and ethos is established and that the school works efficiently and effectively. It does this by building a thorough knowledge of the school and its community, by both supporting and constructively challenging the school, and ensuring compliance. The Governing Board of our school is made up of various categories of Governors who all work together in the interest of children at the School.

A vacancy has arisen for a/2 Parent Governor(s). Before deciding whether to nominate yourself, you may want to know a bit more about what is involved. Governors need not be experts in the field of education. What they do need is an interest in the school and in the welfare of our children as well as the time and willingness to get involved. Further details can be found on our website. At the moment the Governing Board would welcome nominations from individuals with expertise in [insert skills criteria].

Training and support is available to Governors. You need the ability to be able to work as part of a team, to question proposals and contribute to discussions so that the Board can make good decisions. All Governors are expected to be able to read straightforward budget reports and data on school standards.

We expect Governors to:

- attend termly meetings of the full Governing Board
- contribute as a member of a Committee and attend termly meetings
- visit the school formally at least once a year
- attend school events when possible to support the work of the school and improve your knowledge and understanding of the school
- attend training courses and be ready to be interviewed by Ofsted inspectors when necessary

In return, we commit to

- provide access to quality training
- provide you with access to our on-line GovernorHub portal giving easy access to documents, agendas and information to support you in your role

If you would like to find out more about our current Governors and the work of the Board please see our website. You might also like to look at the information for prospective Governors on www.inspiringgovernance.org or via our Clerking Service www.trustgs.co.uk

Please note that for the protection of children all governor appointments are subject to a DBS check and identity check.

If you would like to put yourself forward as a candidate, please complete and return the attached documents to me by << INSERT CLOSING DATE FOR NOMINATIONS NO LESS THAN 10 DAYS >>. Your nomination should be accompanied by a short personal statement which should include (in no more than 250 words please):

- evidence of the extent to which you possess the skills and experience the Governing Board desires;
- your commitment to undertake training to acquire or develop the skills to be an effective Governor;
- if seeking re-election, details of your contribution to the work of the Governing Board during your previous term of office; and
- how you plan to contribute to the future work of the Governing Board.

If it is necessary for there to be an election, I will contact you to let you know about the arrangements.

Yours sincerely

Head teacher/Chair of Governors

Enclosed: Nomination form, Eligibility Self Declaration Form

NOMINATION FORM – PARENT GOVERNOR

A Parent Governor is defined as a person who is elected as a member of the Governing Board of the school, by parents of registered pupils at the school, and who is a parent at the time s/he is elected. "Parent" includes any individual who has or has had parental responsibility for, or cares or has cared for, a child or young person under the age of 19 who attends the school.

A person is disqualified from standing for election or appointment as a Parent Governor if s/he is:

- An elected member of the local education authority; or
- Paid to work at the school for more than 500 hours in any consecutive 12 month period (at the time of the election or appointment); or
- Subject to any of the disqualifications under The School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012 Schedule 4

Name:

Name of Child at School (and Year Group):

Address:

Telephone Number:

Email address:

- I agree to nomination as a Parent Governor. I have read the requirements of the role and confirm I am eligible.
- I attach my personal statement and understand that this will be communicated to all parents if an election is necessary.

Personal statement (attached no more than 250 words)

Signed:

Dated:

SAMPLE LETTER FOR ELECTION & BALLOT PAPER

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

Parent Governor Election

I wrote to you on <insert date> to invite nominations for the vacancy/vacancies for a Parent Governor/Parent Governors.

I am delighted to say that there has been a good response and there are <insert number> candidates for the <insert number> vacancy/vacancies. This means we must now hold a ballot.

I enclose a ballot paper. You can vote for up to <insert number equal to the number of vacancies> of the candidates. As indicated on the ballot paper you should vote by marking an X alongside the name/names of the parent/parents you choose for the role. The Board would be grateful if you could consider the skills criteria currently needed which is XXXXXXXXX

Also enclosed are two envelopes. This is intended to ensure that how you vote remains confidential. Once you have marked the ballot paper you should seal it in one envelope – please do not mark this envelope. Then put this **unmarked envelope** (containing the ballot paper) into the second envelope. You should then put your name, name of your child at the school on the outside of the **second envelope** and add your signature.

The closing date for the return of ballot papers is <insert date>. (Not less than 5 school days should be allowed for the return of ballot papers.)

Please hand the envelope in to School. It can be returned by your child or posted.

When the envelopes are received we check the outer envelopes to make sure that they are from parents who are entitled to vote. They are then opened and the inner envelopes are placed unopened in the ballot box. This ensures that when we open the inner envelopes to count the votes there is no way of telling who voted for whom.

I will inform you of the name of the new Parent Governor(s) in due course and appropriate details will be published on the website. Further details regarding the Governing Board can be found on our website.

Yours sincerely

Head teacher/Chair of Governors

Enclosed: Ballot sheets/personal statements, Ballot paper

SAMPLE BALLOT PAPER FOR THE ELECTION

LIST OF CANDIDATES

1. NAME OF CANDIDATE

2. NAME OF CANDIDATE

3. NAME OF CANDIDATE

4. NAME OF CANDIDATE

You may only vote for **ONE** candidate by putting an X in the appropriate box. You should not put any other mark on the ballot paper.

This form must be returned to the school by the end of the day on (date**) at the latest.**