

Haringey Governors' Services

Procedures and Guidance for the Election of Parent Governors

Updated September 2015

Introduction and Background

Why do we need parent governors on a governing body?

Governing bodies are an integral part of school leadership, setting the ethos of the school, driving continuous improvement, supporting, challenging and holding to account the headteacher and other members of the school leadership team by negotiating stretching targets for improvements in standards and monitoring progress towards them. It is very important that parents stand for election to the governing body so that the views of parents with children at the school are represented on it.

What is their role?

All governors are equal, no category of governor is any more important or influential than any other. As a parent governor you hold the unique position of having a parental viewpoint. Through the children, you will have first-hand experience of the curriculum and how the school is perceived from the children's and parents' point of view. You will be able to bring this perspective to the strategic management of the school.

As part of the governing body, which has corporate responsibility, a parent governor is a representative and not a delegate of parents. As a parent governor, you do not have to vote in a particular way because you have been pressed to do so by parents. Objectivity, however, is essential. You are not there to promote the interests of your own children but all children. Parent governors are elected by other parents and it is important to establish a rapport with the parental body that elected you, whilst continuing to maintain a strategic approach to school governance.

All governors must ensure that the governing body has a strong focus on their three core strategic functions:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils; and
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent

These functions are reflected in regulations for maintained schools and forms part of the criteria Ofsted inspectors use to judge how effective governors are in discharging their core functions.

All governors have a right to take part in discussion on all items, put items on the agenda and so on, unless there is a conflict of interest (e.g a financial interest in a topic under discussion or personal knowledge of a child or incident which occurred at the school which has been brought to the attention of governors

Do you need specific skills?

A school may specify specific skills or experience that would be desirable in a new governor, such as the willingness to learn or skills that would help the governing body improve its effectiveness and address any specific challenges it may be facing. Schools can request:

- evidence of the extent to which prospective parents possess the skills and experience the governing body desires;
- a commitment to undertake training to acquire or develop the skills to be an effective governor; Governing bodies have a challenging job to do. High quality induction and continual professional development is vital to equip governors with the skills they need;
- if seeking re-election, details of their contribution to the work of the governing body during their previous term of office; and
- how they plan to contribute to the future work of the governing body.

1. General Arrangements

This guidance applies to all maintained community, community special, maintained nursery and voluntary controlled and voluntary aided schools. Academies may also find the guide of benefit as a model of good practice.

The responsibility for organising and determining all matters relating to the election of parent governors is the Local Authority (LA). In Haringey, responsibility for conducting elections is delegated to the Headteacher who acts as the returning officer in accordance with this guidance.

Accordingly the Headteacher shall be responsible for:

- Setting dates for the receipt of nominations
- Setting dates for polls
- Distributing nomination papers
- Distributing voting papers
- Counting votes cast
- Declaring the result of the election to parents

2. Electorate

Parents, including carers, of registered pupils at the school are eligible to stand for election for parent governorship at the school. Each parent who has a child or children in the school on the day nominations for candidature close, shall be entitled to one vote for each vacancy. Separated parents who have neither care nor custody of their

children shall be entitled to vote but shall be required to advise the school of their desire to participate in the election.

If an insufficient number of parents stand for election, the governing body may appoint:

- a parent of a registered pupil at the school, or if that is not possible
- a parent of a former pupil at the school, or if that is not possible
- a parent of a child of or under compulsory school age.

A person is disqualified from election or appointment as a parent governor of a school if they are an elected member of the LA or if they work at the school for more than 500 hours in any consecutive 12 month period (i.e. for more than one-third of the hours of a full-time equivalent) in a school year at the time of election or appointment.

3. Candidates

The qualifications for candidature shall be the same as for voting.

The headteacher shall send a circular or letter via either the pupils, by post or electronically (where available) to all parents entitled to vote seeking nominations to fill the vacancy. At least 10 school days shall be allowed between the despatch of the circular and the closing date (and time).

Nominations shall require the full name and address of the candidate, the name(s) and age(s) of their children at the school and their signature indicating his/her willingness to serve.

Nominations must include the full name and address of a proposer, who must also be eligible to vote in the election, the name(s) and age(s) of the proposer's child(ren) at the school together with the signature of the proposer.

The Headteacher shall request from each candidate brief biographical details not exceeding 100 words. This should offer candidates the opportunity to set out:

- evidence of the extent to which they possess the skills and experience the governing body desires;
- their commitment to undertake training to acquire or develop the skills to be an effective governor;
- if seeking re-election, details of their contribution to the work of the governing body during their previous term of office; and
- how they plan to contribute to the future work of the governing body.

Following the closing date for nominations, candidates may within three days, withdraw their nomination.

4. Voting

If there are more valid nominations than vacancies, a poll shall be held. The election shall be undertaken by means of a secret ballot.

The Headteacher shall prepare voting papers which shall include the details as set out including biographical details of the candidates on the reverse. Voting papers shall be distributed, via pupil post, one to each parent entitled to vote in the election irrespective of the number of children attending the school.

A period of five school days shall be allowed for the return of the voting papers to the school. Parents may use pupil post, post or return voting papers personally to the school. A ballot box shall be provided at the school.

The Headteacher shall undertake the count of votes cast. Candidates shall be informed of the date, time and place of the count and may be present if they wish.

In the event of a tied ballot for a vacancy, a further ballot shall be held between the tied candidates only to determine the parent to be elected to the vacancy.

5. Declaration of Results

The Headteacher shall display the results of the election on school notice boards, advise parents of the results in their next bulletin to parents and shall inform Governor Services of the result. Governor Services will enter their details on the Governor database, send them a new governor pack and invite them to attend the new governor induction training.