

Guidelines for the Election of Parent Governors

Who can stand as and vote for parent governors?

The definition of a parent in education legislation includes:

- all natural parents whether they are married or not;
- any person that has parental responsibility for a child or young person and;
- any person who has care of a child or young person.

AND

- has a child on roll at the time of election.

A person cannot be a Parent Governor if:

- They are an elected member of the Local Authority or
- Works at the school for more than 500 hours in any school year
- They meet the disqualifying criteria in The School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012

In addition, a person may **not be appointed** as a parent governor unless they are:

- a parent of a registered pupil at the school, or
- a parent of a former pupil of the school, or
- a parent of a child of or under compulsory school age, (Special Schools only - and with special educational needs for which the school is approved), or
- a parent with experience of educating a child with special education needs - Special Schools only

Parent governors usually have a four year term of office unless the Governing Body has registered a variation to this in the school's Instrument of Government.

Contact Governor Services on 01942 486090 for further clarification on any of the above.

Process for electing Parent Governors

Seeking Nominations

Nominations should be sought

- As soon as a resignation is received from a parent governor; or
- At the beginning of a term in which a parent governor's term of office is due to expire

The Headteacher should send a letter to all parents inviting nominations for the post (**see nomination form and the list of disqualifications in Appendix A**).

Where pupils have more than one person with parental responsibility who are living at different addresses, a letter should be sent to each address.

Closing date for nominations

The closing date for nominations should be at least ten school days from the date on which the letters are distributed. The actual closing date and time should be clearly stated in the letter, as should the date of the proposed ballot should one be required.

Number of nominations received

If the number of nominations is equal to, or fewer than the number of vacancies to be filled, a ballot does not need to be held.

The nominee(s) is then elected unopposed into the vacancy. The Headteacher will then write to the parent with the outcome. All other parents should also be informed. An entry in the next school Newsletter or other standard communication would also be sufficient. Governors and all members of staff should also be notified.

If there are more nominations than there are vacancies, the Headteacher will arrange for a secret ballot to be held.

The ballot

The Headteacher shall issue ballot papers to all eligible parents as soon as possible after the closing date for the receipt of nominations. Parents will be given a deadline for returning ballot papers and this should be at least six school working days from the day they are issued. Each ballot paper should be given a unique number to avoid duplication of votes. Remember a parent who has more than one child in school should only receive **one** ballot paper.

The election should be held by secret ballot. Ballot papers themselves should not be signed or the voter identified in any way.

The Headteacher should arrange to get ballot papers to and from parents by pupil post where possible. Where a pupil does not live with a person who has parental responsibility, or they are absent from school when the ballot papers are issued they will need to be posted or delivered to the parents by some other method.

Ballot papers must be kept unopened and secure until the count.

Candidates have the right to attend the count, and must be advised of the venue, date and time of the count at the same time as the ballot papers are sent out.

The count

The ballot box shall be opened no later than 12pm on the next school working day after the closing date for the return of ballot papers, as notified to the candidates. The Headteacher, or his/her nominee, will conduct the count, in the presence of at least two other members of staff.

If there is a tie in the numbers of votes cast, the first step should be to recount the votes. If the votes are still equal for two or more candidates, the Headteacher shall arrange for those candidates to draw lots or toss a coin.

After the election

The Headteacher shall notify the result to the successful candidate(s) if they are not present at the count within three school working days. The letter should still be sent to the successful candidate if they were in attendance, to confirm their election and term office. The school should then inform Governor Services on 01942 486090 or email governorservices@wigan.gov.uk of the new appointment.

All parents shall be notified of the result. An entry in the next school Newsletter or other standard communication would also be sufficient. Governors and all members of staff should also be notified.

All material relevant to the election (e.g. correspondence, ballot papers) to be kept for six months before being destroyed.

Unsuccessful candidates

Any unsuccessful candidates should be notified of the outcome and thanked for their interest

Timetable

Issue of the nomination forms to receipt of the forms	At least 10 school days
Checking of the nomination forms to announcement of the result or preparing for an election	As soon as possible but not more than 5 school days
Issue of the ballot papers for election to close of the poll	At least 6 school days
Counting of the ballot papers to declaration of the result (this can be either announced immediately or delayed if required)	3 school days

Appointment of parent governors

If, after seeking nominations from parents of current pupils, vacancies for parent governors still remain, the Governing Body in accordance with the regulations can fill these through an appointment process. It is strongly recommended that two attempts are made at running elections to fill the vacancies before looking at appointing parent governors. A letter or promotional flyer can be used to advertise for parent governors. Please contact Governor Services for a copy of a promotional flyer.

If a parent is identified, they can be appointed by the Governing Body at their next Full Governing Body meeting. The appointment should be a specified agenda item and should be accurately minuted. The Headteacher will then write to the parent with the outcome. All other parents should also be. An entry in the next school Newsletter or other standard communication would also be sufficient. Governors and all members of staff should also be notified.

Role of the Parent Governor

The Governing Body has a strategic role in the leadership of the school. The core functions of the Governing Body are to:

- Ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.
- Hold executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff.
- Oversee the financial performance of the organisation and make sure its money is well spent.

Parent governors are in a unique position on a governing body. Not only do parent governors have to work in the best interests of the school, but they have to balance this with their natural desire to see the best outcomes for their own child(ren).

What are the good bits about being a Parent governor?

- You have a very privileged and responsible role.
- You have the opportunity to make a difference for all children and to influence the way in which school works.

- You have the opportunity to make a difference, not only for your children, but for children in years to come.
- You will learn a lot and develop new skills.

How you fulfil your role

- Attend governing body meetings regularly and play an active role in committees and decision – making.
- Undertake induction training and commit to other development opportunities
- Visit school.
- Learn all you can about the school.
- Be approachable to other parents, 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.
- Always support the decisions of the full governing body. Have your say on decisions in meetings and vote in a way you wish; but then support the outcomes of votes – even if you disagree with them.
- Always, always, 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 or removed for serious breaches of confidentiality.

What you are not supposed to do

- Gather the views of other parents and take them to the Governing Body.
- Represent the interests of individual parents.
- Be a link between parents and the governing body.
- Bring complaints about the school to governing body meetings.
- Vote as instructed by other parents.