



So, you have a foundation governor vacancy... ...a guide for governing boards.

v.Feb 24 (Maintained Schools)



What is the role of a foundation governor?

Foundation governors are an important part of the wider team of governors. As such their main role is to work with other members of the governing board to fulfil all of the functions required of all school governors, undertaking training as required. However, a foundation governor has a specific role.

The role of the Foundation Governor is to ensure that the full governing board nurtures, encourages and challenges the school in living out its Christian foundation.

This is achieved through:

- Developing the distinctive Christian vision and character of the school;
- Ensuring high-quality Collective Worship and Religious Education are regularly monitored and evaluated;
- Securing positive links between the school, the parish and the Diocese;
- Promoting the Christian vision and values through the way in which the governing board conducts its business;
- Ensuring that development as a church school is embedded in the school improvement plan and a regular part of the governing board self-evaluation;
- Ensuring that points for development following Section 48 (SIAMS) inspection are addressed and taking an active role in the SIAMS process;
- Being involved in the recruitment process for a new Head Teacher;
- Reporting to the Parochial Church Council (PCC) or the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) as appropriate.

It is not the role of foundation governors to solely take on responsibility for the 'church school' aspects of governance, all governors are governors of a church school. It is your role as foundation governor to ensure the whole board plays its role in preserving and enhancing the distinctive ethos of the school.

Who can be appointed as a foundation governor?

Governing boards should comprise a diverse mix of people with different knowledge, aptitudes and abilities and from a range of backgrounds and contexts. When selecting new foundation governors it is worthwhile to consider the following:

- Are there any significant knowledge or skills shortages within the board?
- How can this appointment support the diversification of the board?
- Does the potential governor work at the school? The DBE takes the view that staff members should not become foundation governors.
- Is the potential governor over 18? This is a legal requirement.
- Does the potential governor have the commitment and time to undertake such a demanding role? The work of the school governor has become increasingly demanding.

Foundation governors represent the Church of England and the Diocese so all nominations must be from potential governors who can commit to preserving and enhancing the Christian vision and foundation of the school. Incumbents, chairs of governors or headteachers can nominate foundation governors for appointment by the DBE. All three must be in agreement with the nomination and the nominator will be asked how and why the nominee will make a good foundation governor.

Applicants are asked about their commitment on the application form (see below). They are also asked to reflect on the special role of the foundation governor and indicate how they feel they are suited to it.

Please select the criteria which is most applicable to you. *

- I am a practising member of the Church of England and I will commit to preserve and enhance the Christian vision and foundation of the school.
- I am a member of a different Christian church and I will commit to preserve and enhance the Christian vision and foundation of the school.
- I am a member of a different faith community and I will commit to preserve and enhance the Christian vision and foundation of the school.
- I am not a practising member of a religious community but I will commit to preserve and enhance the Christian vision and foundation of the school.

Next steps for the board.

At the Diocesan Education Team, we are regularly asked if we can supply a foundation governor when a vacancy arises. We are sorry to say that we don't hold a list of prospective governors as useful as that might be.

If you have a vacancy for a foundation governor here are the steps you should take and some suggestions for recruiting volunteers. These tips can also be applied to other governor vacancies.

1. Ensure that a skills analysis has taken place so that you are searching for a governor with the right knowledge skills and aptitudes.
2. Check with your Instrument of Government to see if the vacancy is for a foundation governor appointed by the PCC or by the DBE. If it is a PCC appointment then the application needs to be approved by the PCC and their involvement is important.
3. Once found, ensure that the incumbent, headteacher and chair of governors are all in agreement. For a DBE-appointed foundation governor, there is an online nomination form. For PCC appointments you need to refer to your PCC.

For further support and advice speak to your named adviser or email info.ed@leeds.anglican.org.

Tips on Searching for Volunteers

- Use Inspiring Governance <https://www.inspiringgovernance.org/>
- Make contact with your local minister, church or PCC. Can they nominate someone with the appropriate skills? If you are in a federation or MAT you can approach every parish and not just those associated with your school directly.
- You can approach all ecumenical churches in your area or other places of worship of a recognised religion. A foundation governor from another Christian denomination or another faith can be appointed. Contact other parishes and mission communities; if you are close to a county border we can help with details of those in other counties and dioceses.
- Be as proactive as you might with staff recruitment. Approaching local businesses can work. Companies encourage staff to volunteer and they may be able to fill skills gaps. For example, if you needed financial knowledge you could write directly to finance departments, accountancy firms and local businesses asking for a volunteer committed to church school education. It is estimated around 15 million people in the country attended a church school.
- Contact other schools/church schools. They may have a governor who could also serve on your board. Or they may have a future school leader for whom being part of a governing board at a different school might be a great development opportunity.
- Explore your parent body. Have you had any parent elections recently? If you have, people who weren't elected might be willing to be foundation governors.
- Ask current members of staff and governors whether they know of anyone who might be interested in becoming a governor.
- Ask regular visitors to the school, such as parent helpers, and community police officers, whether they would be interested in becoming school governors, or if they know anyone who might. Include all outside agencies that you come across, for example, social workers and trade union representatives can bring useful knowledge and skills to the board.
- When the school holds public events (such as parents' evenings, open evenings, sports days, public performances of music or drama or presentation evenings, ensure that recruitment leaflets and posters are displayed in a prominent place and draw visitors' attention to them. Experience has taught us that vacancies are more easily filled when recruitment is an ongoing process.
- Ensure that your school newsletter and website have a section advertising current and forthcoming vacancies. Also, make sure that governance is prominent with your parents and local community, people are more likely to volunteer to a body they have heard of and admire.
- Compile a list of local parish, trade and resident association magazines and newsletters and ask whether you could use them to advertise governor vacancies.
- Ask local charities for nominations.
- Make use of all local public venues: ask your local church, library, doctors' and dentists' surgeries, community centre and hospital if they would be willing to display governor recruitment posters and leaflets (see below).
- If you have schools you feed into or feed into you, such as preschools, make contact with them and put together an advertisement. A child's transition from one school to another is an ideal time for parents to become involved.

- Social media is also an excellent way to grab people's attention. Please remember to adhere to your school's policy on the use of social media.
- Hold a recruitment afternoon or evening – an informal event with refreshments to which parents and/or members of the local community are invited to chat with the headteacher, chair of governors and perhaps one or two other governors about the role of school governor. You could just hold a virtual meeting for those who might be interested to explain the role further.

Final advice

- You can use all of the approaches above at the same time, it is better to have a choice if possible.
- Schools where the board has a high profile and is recognised for their efforts by the community find it easier to recruit.
- Don't just accept the first candidate that comes along.
- Most boards hold informal interviews not only to assess the suitability of the candidate but also to share the realities of the role with the prospective governor.
- Make sure that you follow recommended safeguarding procedures; safer recruitment processes are relevant to volunteers too.
- Finally, ensure that your induction plans and processes are in place and up to date. It is best to think of this now rather than waiting for your new governor to arrive.

Appendix 1: Sample Advertisement for a foundation governor.



An Opportunity to Serve your Community as a Foundation Governor

Enter the School/Academy name

We currently have a vacancy for a Foundation Governor on our governing board and we would like you to consider whether you could serve God in this way.

Our governing board works together as a team and has the responsibility to do the following:

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

As a Foundation Governor, you will specifically make sure that the governing board

- Preserves and enhances the religious character of the school
- Ensures that the school is conducted and led in accordance with its trust deed

The term of office is for four years from the date of appointment.

As well as having the right attitude, we are looking for someone with the following attributes:

- *Add required skills/experience/knowledge here*
- *Here*
- *Here*

Time commitment varies but averages between eight and twelve hours per month.

Add details here about the regularity of meetings, where and what time of the day.

Anyone interested in the mission of foundation governor should not be put off by a lack of experience. Appropriate training is available during the period of service.

If you would like further information please contact *name and details* who will be willing to talk through with you what it's like being a governor and how it all works.

Appendix 2: Sample Advertisement Poster/Flyer for a foundation governor.



 THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Leeds

JOIN THE TEAM

YOUR LOCAL CHURCH SCHOOL IS SEEKING A FOUNDATION GOVERNOR

Could you volunteer to join the governing board?
Do you want to serve your community and make a difference?



Experience and skills
You would be joining a governing board with a range of experience and skills, what could you bring to the team?



Christian character
Foundation governors operate at a strategic level, ensuring that the Christian vision and character of the school are upheld.



A team player
As well as joining an experienced team, the school and diocese will provide support and training to help you settle in.



Can you spare 8-10 hours per month?
Attend at least 3 full governor meetings per year?
Join a sub-group or committee?

Contact us to find out more: