



# Parent Governor Guidance

# Being a Parent Governor

## Have you ever considered becoming a parent governor?

Have you ever wondered how parent governors are elected and what they do?

Do you wish to be involved in decisions affecting the education of children in your child's school? If so, then please read on.

## Can anyone be a Parent Governor?

Yes, with very few exceptions. No formal qualifications are required but you must have a child who is a registered pupil at the school. Being a school governor is challenging, stimulating, interesting and, in today's rapidly changing educational world, vitally important. Spending time getting to know your child's school, informing yourself and attending meetings is also very rewarding.

## Why do we need Parent Governors?

Schools do not exist in isolation from their communities. They profit from the knowledge and experience which you, as parents, can offer. Schools value the constructive support, influence and information which an enthusiastic governing body can provide.

## What is a school governing body?

Although the responsibilities of governors have changed over the past few years with more schools becoming Multi Academy Trusts, the basic role of a governing body is to help run a school in the interest of the community it serves.

## Who are the governors on the school governing body?

Each school within the New Bridge Multi Academy Trust has a local governing body which consists of 2 staff governors (one of them the Head of Site), 2 parent governors and 3 co-opted governors. The Executive Principal is also an ex-officio governor.

## What does the governing body do?

Governors take part in:

- Supporting the work of the school
- Appointing staff
- Setting targets
- Setting standards of behaviour
- Deciding how money is spent
- Attending events to meet with parents and the local community

## What commitment do Parent Governors give?

Normally parent governors serve on a governing body for up to four years and many continue to serve following re-appointment or re-election. Governing bodies have to meet at least once each term. Many governors meet more often to conduct their business, serving as members of working parties or committees.

Governors sometimes need to be available during school hours to visit the school, to talk to children and staff and to take part in selecting staff. School governors are covered by the provisions of the Employment Protection Act requiring employers to grant employees reasonable (unpaid) time off for public duties.

All the work is voluntary.

## How can I become a parent governor?

If you are a parent of a school child, you can stand in an election to become a parent governor at your child's school. Vacancies will be advertised on the school website and letters sent home with your child.

# Election of Parent Governors

Trustees of The New Bridge Group are responsible for the organisation of parent governor elections and any enquiry or dispute is dealt with and, if necessary, determined by the Executive Principal.

Responsibility for the conduct of parent governor elections is delegated to the Executive Principal, as returning officer, and elections are conducted in accordance with the procedures set out in this document.

## **1 Parent Governors**

1.1 A "parent governor" is

- a) a person who is elected as a governor by parents of registered pupils at the New Bridge Group and who is himself/herself such a parent at the time when elected, or
- b) a person appointed as a parent governor (specific circumstances apply to this)

1.3 Registered pupils at the New Bridge Group include children at Hollinwood Academy, New Bridge School, New Bridge Learning Centre and Spring Brook Academy. A letter will be sent out stating which school the vacancy exists at.

## **2 Definition of Parent**

2.1 Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines a parent as:

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility (as defined in Children Act 1989) for a child or young person;
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

Having care of a child means that a person with whom a child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship with the child is, is considered to be a parent in education law.

## **3 Eligibility to stand for election as a parent governor and to participate in Parent Governor elections**

3.1 Anyone who is the parent of a registered pupil at the New Bridge Group and who is not disqualified from holding office (see 3.2 & 3.3) is eligible to stand for election as a parent governor.

3.2 A person is disqualified from election or appointment as a parent governor of a school if they are paid to work at the school for more than 500 hours in any consecutive twelve month period or, when he/she ceases to be a parent of a registered pupil at the school.

3.3 Other disqualification criteria are set out below.

3.4 Anyone who is a parent of a registered pupil at the New Bridge Group may nominate themselves and may vote in the elections.

- 3.5 Each parent has one vote per vacancy, regardless of the number of children s/he has at the New Bridge Group. The New Bridge Group will ensure that each parent receives only one nomination and ballot paper regardless of how many children s/he has on roll at the school.

#### **4 Procedures to be followed in the event of a vacancy**

- 4.1 A letter is sent to everyone who is known to be a parent of a child in the school. The letter will include the following information:
- number of vacancies to be filled
  - nomination form
  - where to get additional copies of the nomination form, if required
  - closing date for the return of nomination forms to the school (**seven days from the date of the letter**)
  - possibility of nominees producing a short personal statement to go out with the ballot paper (see paragraph 4.6).
- 4.2 **Parents must nominate themselves.** However, the nomination form must be proposed by one person and seconded by another person, both of whom should be entitled to vote at the election.
- 4.3 As nomination forms are received, they are checked to ensure that they have been signed. If any signatures are missing, the nomination form will be returned.
- 4.4 The Executive Principal ensures before any election is called, that every person nominated and every proposer is a parent of a registered pupil at the New Bridge Group. Also, that every nominee confirms in writing that s/he is a parent of a registered pupil at the school and is not disqualified from holding office as a governor if elected.
- 4.5 If the number of nominations received is equal to, or fewer than, the number of vacancies, then there is no need to hold an election and those nominated should be declared elected and procedures recommenced for filling any remaining vacancy or vacancies. In such cases, a letter should immediately be sent to parents advising them of the names of candidates elected.
- 4.6 Where an election is to be held candidates may, if they wish, produce a short personal statement, a copy of which will be circulated with ballot papers. These statements should be no longer than 250 words and should contain factual information about the candidate such as the number and ages of their children at the school, particular interests and occupation. Candidates must be given a deadline by which the statement must be submitted. If the candidate wishes to have the statement typed by the administration staff at the school, an earlier deadline would be necessary.
- 4.7 If a statement has not been received by the due date, checks are made to ensure that the candidate does not claim to have submitted one. An extra 48 hours may be granted to candidates still wishing to submit a statement.

- 4.8 It will be necessary to reproduce enough copies of the personal statement and of the standard ballot paper sent with these notes to enable each parent to have one copy. To minimise the possibility of blank ballot papers being copied, it is recommended that coloured paper is used.
- 4.9 A further letter is sent to every parent to include the following:
- one ballot paper per parent plus personal statements (every parent must receive a ballot paper). Ballot papers must not be marked in any way which could lead to the identification of the voter, nor should the voter sign anything attached to the ballot paper
  - closing date for the return of ballot papers to the school (**seven days from the date of despatch of the ballot papers**)
  - advice on alternative methods of returning the ballot papers, i.e. by pupil post, by post or by personal delivery
  - information on the location of the ballot box where voting papers may be placed by parents or pupils returning them personally, e.g. in the school office or reception area.
- 4.10 All ballot papers, regardless of how they are returned, must be put in a secure ballot box (which must be locked away at night) and not removed until the time of the count.
- 4.11 Voting by proxy will not be allowed i.e. if a parent is for any reason unable personally to vote (e.g. because s/he is away on business or on holiday), it will not be possible for the parent to make arrangements for another person to vote on her/his behalf.
- 4.12 Duplicate ballot papers should only be issued if the parent completes a form (sample attached) verifying that the original was not received or has been lost, and that s/he will vote only once in the election and will destroy the original ballot paper if found.

## **5 Counting the Vote**

- 5.1 The Executive Principal, as returning officer, is responsible for counting the votes and for deciding the validity of dubious or spoilt voting papers.
- 5.2 The Executive Principal should not undertake this task without witnesses (any member of staff or Local Governing Body who does not have a personal interest in the outcome of the voting may act as witness).
- 5.3 Votes must not be counted or removed from the secure ballot box until after the closing date.
- 5.5 Candidates should be advised of the time and venue of the count so that they may attend, or be represented, if they wish.
- 5.6 Depending on the number of vacancies, the candidate or candidates gaining the most votes should be declared elected.
- 5.7 If the number of votes cast for any two or more candidates differs by less than five there should be an automatic recount.

- 5.8 Certain ties will not be important, e.g. if there are four Parent Governor places and two candidates tie for first, second or third places, then both should be declared elected.
- 5.9 In the event of a tie for the only or last remaining place to be filled, the votes should be recounted and in the event of the result being confirmed, the candidates with equal votes should be invited to draw lots to establish the successful candidate.

## **6 After the Election**

- 6.1 The clerk will send out letters of appointment and other relevant information to the successful candidate(s).
- 6.2 The clerk will notify the trustees, members, governors and parents of the result of the election.
- 6.2.1 Details of the number of ballot papers issued and returned should be recorded and ballot papers retained securely for six months after the date of the election in case the result is challenged.

## Disqualifications

A person shall be disqualified from being a governor or an associate member if they:

1. Are not aged 18 or over at the date of this election or appointment.
2. Are registered pupils at the New Bridge Group.
3. Already hold a governorship of the same school.
4. Have a mental disorder and are detained under the Mental Health Act 1983. A governor shall cease to hold office if he/she becomes incapable by reason of mental disorder, illness or injury of managing or administering his own affairs.
5. Are bankrupt.
6. Are subject to a disqualification order under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986 or to an order made under section 429(2)(b) of the Insolvency Act 1986.
7. Have been removed from the office of a charity trustee or trustee for a charity by an order made by the Charity Commissioners or the High Court on the grounds of any misconduct or mismanagement or, under section 7 of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990, from being concerned in the management or control of any body.
8. Are included in the list (List 99) of teachers and workers with children of young persons whose employment is prohibited or restricted.
9. Are disqualified from being the proprietor of any independent school or from being a teacher or other employee in any school by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills.
10. In the five years prior to becoming a governor, have received a sentence of imprisonment, suspended or otherwise, for a period of not less than three months without the option of a fine.
11. Have received a prison sentence of two and half years or more in the twenty years before becoming a governor.
12. Have at any time received a prison sentence for five years or more.
13. Have been fined, in the five years prior to becoming a governor, for causing a nuisance or disturbance on educational premises.
14. Are subject to a disqualification order under the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000.
15. Refuse to an application being made to the Criminal Records Bureau for a criminal records certificate.

**It should also be noted that a person is now 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 a school year (at the time of election or appointment)**