

The differences in being a foundation governor

Being a foundation representative brings particular responsibilities. This information is designed to guide you through these, most of which will fall into place as you become familiar with the role.

Foundation Governance

Foundation Governors/Trustees are those appointed by the Diocese which is a legal duty. Often in Anglican schools the incumbent of the parish will be a member of the governing board, by virtue of his/her office – this is called an ex officio governor. Other foundation governors will mostly be active lay people.

In **Voluntary Aided** schools, there will always be a majority of foundation governors – they must outnumber all the other governors together by two.

In **Voluntary Controlled** schools, there must be at least two foundation governors.

In **Academy trusts** there are a number of trustees (also sometimes called directors); some of these will be foundation appointments – depending on the articles of association; these will either be the majority of appointments or minority; there will always be at least two in a trust containing Church of England schools.

As a foundation appointee, you will share equally with the other members of the board many important responsibilities for oversight of the maintained school, including for example: management of the school budget; employment of the teaching staff and most of the support staff; responsibility for maintenance and upkeep of the building.

In academies the responsibility is set out in a scheme of delegation and focuses on monitoring, safeguarding and some recruitment.

But, in addition to those common responsibilities, foundation appointees are also charged with a special responsibility in particular and most importantly, this also means giving special attention to:

- Ensuring the work of the board is undertaken in accordance with the Christian ethos
- Arrangements for collective worship (after consultation with the Headteacher/s) and ensuring that such arrangements are in accordance with Trust Deeds
- The religious education offered by the school/s ensuring that it follows the guidelines of the Diocese
- The arranging of the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) which includes collective worship, religious education, leadership & management and church school distinctiveness and spiritual and moral development of pupils - this is required under Section 48 of the Education Act, and takes place every three to five years.
- Ensuring that the Diocesan Education Office is informed of the resignation of the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher
- The appointment of staff ensuring that all teaching and support staff are made aware of the character and foundation of the school/s

- Bringing to the attention of the Diocesan Board of Education any matters requiring their attention regarding the school/s or trust.

Any foundation director or governor will need to be in a position to monitor and ask questions about the religious character/Christian distinctiveness and whether it is being “preserved and developed” in their church school.

Governing bodies in Church schools are responsible for ensuring the school’s Christian distinctiveness is maintained and embedded in all aspects of school life to promote Religious Education and collective worship in the school and maintain good relations with the parish and local community wherever possible.

What will I be expected to do in addition to attending governing body meetings?

Some governing boards also allocate link governor roles – these roles may be linked to specific classes, subjects or identified priority areas but hopefully aligned with the school improvement plan. Once a governor is allocated a link role, they will be expected to carry out monitoring visits throughout the course of the year. The purpose of these visits is to monitor progress in relation to the link area and the impact of any initiatives which have been implemented.

Governors may also be asked to attend specific school events such as parents’ evenings or information evenings, parent’s forums – they may also be invited to attend school social events and attending these will certainly help new governors to get to know their school.

There is an expectation that governors take responsibility for keeping themselves up-to-date with education matters, so there may be some reading, research or training to be undertaken outside of meetings. An example for church schools may be – an introduction to SIAMS training, to look at the RE syllabus, to review collective worship by networking with other church schools.

Ultimately though any governor role will be based on relationships and building these positively in the school and on the governing body. To be able to ask the ‘what’ questions, along with the ‘why & how’ questions is really important rather than being allowed to be led by the Senior Leaders without checking.

As governors we need to remember to remain strategic in our questioning and don’t get operational.