



## Foundation Governors in Maintained Schools

### Introduction

This policy explains the role of foundation governors as well as the criteria and the process by which foundation governors are appointed to Church of England VA and VC schools within the Diocese of Bristol.

Foundation governors serve in Church of England Voluntary Aided (VA) and Voluntary Controlled (VC) maintained schools. The Bristol Diocesan Board of Education is committed to leading the development of a body of confident, effective church schools that are deeply Christian, belonging at the heart of church and community, serving society's common good. It is the statutory responsibility of the DBE to appoint foundation governors to all maintained VA and VC church schools.

This policy applies to the appointment of foundation governors in Church of England maintained VA and VC schools. There is a separate but parallel policy for the appointment of foundation governors, Trustees and Members of Multi Academy Trusts (MATs)

### The Role of Foundation Governors

The inclusion of foundation governors on the governing boards of both VA and VC church schools is one of the distinguishing characteristics of church school education. Foundation governors represent the historic link with the original church establishment (the 'founding' establishment, hence the term 'foundation') of the school. As such, they are the custodians of its distinctive Christian ethos.

ALL school governors share a corporate responsibility for every aspect of the school. Foundation governors are an integral part of the school leadership team and are responsible, along with their fellow governors, for fulfilling the the core responsibilities of Governing Boards, as set out in the Department for Education's 'Governance Handbook', namely:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff;
- Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.

In addition, as representatives of the church's role in the school, foundation governors must:

- fully support, cherish, preserve and develop the distinctive Christian ethos of the school, ensuring that the school has a distinctive Christian vision and values which lead to effective practice and outcomes
- preserve and strengthen the links between church, school and diocese
- take an active role in the school's self-evaluations of progress against the 'Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools' (SIAMS) schedule
- monitor the collective worship and religious education at the school
- monitor that the distinctive Christian ethos of the school is encouraged and supported throughout its local community and is reflected in its policies, protocols, curriculum and activities



- ensure that their own attitudes and behaviour in relation to the school reflect its distinctive Christian ethos
- inform the Diocese when the school leader's post becomes vacant and, in partnership with the Chair of Governors, invite a representative of the Diocesan Board of Education to advise, support and attend the appointment process.
- to support and challenge the leadership within the school in their links with the wider parish(es) and community and to promote support for school activities and initiatives relating to its Christian distinctiveness and effectiveness

### **The Appointment of Foundation Governors within Church of England VA and VC Schools**

The number of foundation governors which serve a school is specified in the 'instrument of government'. When a foundation governor vacancy arises at a VA or VC school the Chair of Governors must:

- instruct the Clerk to the Governors to inform the Diocese and ensure that a recruitment and appointment process is underway to fill the vacancy
- ensure that there is a description of the skills identified as being required on the governing board (following a skills audit as appropriate)

The governing board, local incumbent and PCC should work together to find a suitable candidate to fill the role. All nominees will be sent a foundation governor application form, which should be completed and returned to the Schools and Governors Officer. Once references and the approval of the PCC have been confirmed in writing, the candidate will be presented to the DBE for their consideration. If there are more candidates with appropriate references than there are vacancies, the DBE will consider the skills and experience of each candidate against the skills audit provided by the school.

The DBE will make the final decision over whether to approve the nomination and appoint. A welcome letter will be issued to the new or renewing foundation governor upon their approval by DBE, explaining their appointment. The appointment will depend upon the completion of a satisfactory enhanced DBS check and declarations and adherence to the applicable Code of Conduct.

We would strongly recommend that the foundation governor attends training provided by the Diocese on governance in a Church school within twelve months of appointment.

### **Criteria for Foundation Governors**

The DBE asks PCCs to consider and nominate candidates who meet the 'DBE Requirements of Foundation Governors' detailed in this policy. Namely, that they are a:

- A regular member of a Church of England Church who is committed to upholding the ethos and values of the Church of England foundations of the school, or
- A regular member of one of the member Churches of 'Churches Together in Britain and Ireland' who is committed to upholding the ethos and values of the Church of England foundations of the school, or
- In exceptional circumstances, a person who is not a regular member of one of these Churches, but is committed to upholding the ethos and values of the Church of England foundations of the school.



A reference from the relevant church leader must be provided by everyone putting their name forward for consideration as a foundation governor. When the 'exception' criteria is being used, the nominee is required to meet with the ex-officio Foundation Governor or local incumbent.

It is important that the PCC work with the school to ensure that the makeup of the governing board includes sufficient foundation representation with the right skills. It is the role of local clergy to interpret for their community the word 'regular' in relation to their attendance for worship as used in this policy.

It should be noted that school staff cannot be appointed as Foundation Governors for the school in which they work.

### **Ex- Officio Foundation Governor**

All church schools have an ex officio foundation governor seat on their governance board which is usually reserved for the incumbent of the parish. This is confirmed by the 'instrument of government' of the school. This document will specify the parish concerned. The ex officio foundation governor remains a governor of the school for as long as he/she is in post.

It is the role of the archdeacon to appoint a substitute foundation governor if the incumbent chooses not to take up the role or there is a vacancy in the parish. The DBE therefore requires incumbents, who, for any reason, do not feel able to take up the ex officio post on a school's governance board, to inform the archdeacon and the DBE so that the archdeacon can seek to appoint a suitable person in place of the incumbent. Enhanced DBS checks are applicable to ex-officio incumbent foundation governors as to all other governors.