

Being a Staff Governor



Staff governors are selected by the staff at their school. Under the new (2012) governance regulations the category is referred to as a staff governor. That means **all** the staff. Anyone employed at the school can be the staff governor. This is a change as previously there may have been a teacher or support staff governor. **All** the staff should be involved in the selection of the governor.

Being a staff governor is sometimes not easy. You can end up wearing many hats and having to be very careful how you react to a given situation. You may be a member of staff, parent, and member of the community or local politician. Only you can decide if you can reconcile these and be an effective governor.

Governors work as a team. No one is expected to know everything and your contribution helps the governing body to support school to be the best it can be. All governors are unpaid volunteers and the governing body should recognise you will give what time you can.



Developing your role as a governor will take time. There is new jargon to learn, courses to attend and understanding the way governance works.

Staff governors are:	Staff governors are not:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• well placed to understand staff views• to remind the governing body how matters being discussed affect staff;• How you vote on any decision is up to you;• in a good position to help the governing body to communicate effectively with staff;• equal in status to all other governors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• expected to gather the views of other staff and take them to the governing body;• simply expected to represent the interests of staff;• a link between staff and the governing body;• expected to vote as instructed by other staff.

Being a governor

Being a governor is a privilege. The only reason governors exist to ensure each and every child in their school receives the very best education possible. We are all there for the same reason.

A governor is a responsible role. You have the opportunity to make a difference, not only for children in school now, but for children in years to come.

The role of governors is to provide strategic direction. As a member of staff you will know that what happens in school on a day to day basis is the responsibility of the head teacher and SLT, not governors.

Governors are the point of accountability for the senior management of school and governors are school leaders. How well education is delivered, the results achieved and how well the school is financially managed are all part of what governors regularly discuss.



The important questions to governance are “why” and “what”. We look at impact and the standards achieved. A typical question may be “£15,000 was spent on new laptops. What was the impact of that?”



Understanding both why a decision was made and the impact it has had on learning affects the decision making process. A reasonable question should always get a reasonable answer and if you are unsure or there was too much jargon ask for an explanation. We all have been in the position where we are learning a new role.

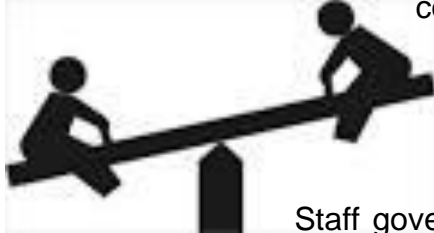
Governors work as a team. Always be supportive of the collective decision. You must not express personal dissatisfaction at decisions to the wider school community. If you feel strongly say so at the point the decision is being made. Rumours will result in damage to your school which is the last thing you want.

Always observe confidentiality. As a governor you will get to know a lot of highly sensitive and confidential information – don’t discuss it with anyone outside meetings. Imagine how you would feel if someone did that to you? Your governing body will have a code of conduct. The simplest way to be removed as a governor is to reveal confidential information to someone else.

Do not get dragged into issues between an individual member of staff and the head teacher or governing body. A staff governor is not a shop steward. Refer the person to the necessary policy and advise them to seek advice, possibly from their union.

What happens if you have a dilemma as a staff governor?

Staff governors are equal to all other governors. Everyone has one vote. The issue for staff governors is that they still have to work with the head and SLT so if you



consistently vote against their ideas will your working relationship be affected? You can ask the clerk to have secret ballots when a vote is taken, that may resolve the issue for you.

Staff governors are excluded from aspects of governance. They cannot take any part in pay decisions about staff. They cannot be chair or vice chair. They cannot be part of the head teacher performance management. They cannot make redundancy decisions.

Staff governors can be part of the head teacher recruitment process. They can be part of teacher recruitment. Both these depend on what the whole governing body decides.

Very occasionally the governing body could make a decision which you feel may affect you in a way you would not have chosen. If a difficulty arises, take a step back and think things through as objectively as you can. If you feel you can't be objective it's reasonable to leave the meeting while the discussion is held.

Make sure you don't break confidentiality when discussing your concerns outside governing body meetings.

Where to get help, advice and support

Everyone starts off as a new governor. There are many different places to learn about what being a governor means.

- From other governors.
- From the chair of governors.
- From the clerk to the governing body – they know how things work
- Ask for a governor mentor or “buddy” to help you
- Attend any new governor training offered – being a governor is different from being an member of staff.
- Your LA may have a governor support team you can email or call.
- There are several governor websites run by governors and a regular twitter meeting run by @UKgovchat – you don't have to contribute but you can read what's going on