

Have you ever thought about becoming a school governor?

- Anyone over the age of 18 can be a school governor – you don't need to be a parent or have any special education experience
- Volunteers usually spend between 5 and 8 hours per month on governing duties – this is a mix of meetings, school visits and reading documents
- The standard term of office is 4 years, but of course if your circumstances change you're free to resign any time
- Each school has its own recruitment process but ours could include an informal meeting with the chair of governors, a tour of the school or even observing a meeting – this is to establish that the school is right for you and you are right for the school.

The 3 core functions of the governing board

Governors and trustees set strategy and hold senior leaders to account – they don't get involved in the day-to-day running of the school or trust. Sometimes it's hard to walk this fine line, but The Governance Handbook explains on page 13 that these are:

- 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 financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent

Being a governor is a very rewarding experience

Your existing skills will be so valuable

People are often surprised that their professional skills from the workplace are valued on a school governing board.

You may also gain new skills

School governance allows you to develop your skills, both personally and professionally. Governors could add the following skills and experience to your CV:

- Strategic planning
- Experience on a board
- Holding senior leaders to account
- Finance, and maintaining oversight of potentially multimillion-pound budgets

- Human resources and performance management
- Project management
- Marketing
- Communication and teamwork
- Decision making

Common concerns

People can often think that:

- It'll take up all your time
 - Governance usually requires about 5 to 8 hours per month (term time only)
- Only parents can be school governors
 - This is NOT true!
 - If you are a parent, you may be pressured by other parents to bring up certain issues
 - Parent governors aren't delegates and don't speak 'on behalf' of the parent body. The role and responsibilities are no different from those of the other governors
- You aren't experienced enough because you haven't been on a board before
 - School governors are the largest volunteer force in education, with around 210,000 governors in England, and you will receive training
- There will be a better candidate
 - Our board is in need of applicants, and there's a national vacancy rate of 10% – i.e. there are many empty governor seats

Benefits of being a governor

There are many potential benefits:

For example:

- Professional development and CV-building:
 - The opportunity to gain board-level experience, strategic decision-making skills, and experience of performance management at a high level
- The philanthropic nature of the role – giving back in your spare time
 - Bigger companies also often have a corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative and are keen to encourage volunteering among their employees, so they could be asked to include governance in their CSR programmes
- Governors play a key role in helping a small town/village thrive, and have a real say in how the school/community is run
- Younger people are unlikely to get this board-level experience in their normal career paths for a long time