



Membership of the Governing Body

The governing bodies of Voluntary Aided schools are a combination of appointed and elected members. The foundation governors are appointed by the local church and the Board of Education to preserve and develop the religious character of the schools and to secure compliance with the Trust Deed. They represent the interests of the church, foundation or other organisation connected with the school and should include parents. The foundation governors are a majority on the governing body.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Foundation Governors

Foundation governors in Voluntary Aided schools provide the visible link between the school, local community and church. They have a duty to:

- ✚ ensure that the character of the school reflects its Christian foundation
- ✚ provide Religious Education in accordance with the Trust Deed. Where provision is not made by a Trust Deed, Religious Education should be in accordance with the denominational character of the school.
- ✚ decide the arrangements for Collective Worship (after consultation with the Headteacher).
- ✚ arrange for the denominational inspection of the school ethos, worship and Religious Education at the same time or within four weeks of an OFSTED Inspection.
- ✚ appoint staff, ensuring that all teaching and non-teaching staff are made aware of the Christian character and foundation of the school.

Other responsibilities which help to preserve and develop the religious character of the school include:

Employment of Staff

The governing body of an Aided school is the employer of staff and should use specific employment contracts which include a requirement to act within the spirit of the Trust Deed.

Admissions

As the admissions authority, the governing body of an Aided school draws up its own policy, giving a high priority to church membership.

In all other respects foundation governors in aided schools have the same responsibilities as the other governors (i.e. the monitoring of the curriculum as a whole; finance; personnel and premises). As the school buildings are owned by the trustees, governors of Aided schools are responsible for any new building and external repairs, supported by a grant from the DCSF of up to 90%.

Charitable Status

Voluntary Aided schools automatically have charitable status. The Charities Commission gives advice on how to make the most effective use of gifts and other



support from parents and the local community.

The Foundation Governor - The Strategic Role

This role is obviously shared by the whole governing body working together as a team with a similar vision for the school. Foundation governors in Aided schools have a particular responsibility to ensure that the mission statement clearly sets out the aim to place the gospel and the teaching of Jesus at the heart of the school's values, work and relationships. This will encourage the provision of a quality of education which is underpinned by a concern for the spiritual and moral dimensions, thus raising standards of achievement in teaching and learning through high expectations and through recognising and valuing each individual's success.

Appointment of Staff

In Aided schools, governors are in law the employers of staff, and in order to preserve the religious character of the school, may give reference to candidates whose religious opinions and worship are in accordance with the denomination of the school. The appointment of headteachers and deputies is of crucial importance. The right leadership makes a great deal of difference to developing and maintaining the distinctive ethos of a church school. In Aided schools the Diocesan Director of Education has the same advisory rights as the Chief Education Officer of the Local Authority. In order that the Diocesan Board of Education can assist or be involved in making appointments it is very important that the Director is notified of any vacancies.

The School and Community


Parents, the church and the wider community in which the school is set are all important and governors will want to use every opportunity to maintain positive relationships with everyone who has an interest in the school. The foundation governors are an important link between the school, church and the wider community. They can effectively contribute to the production of the school's prospectus which should clearly indicate to the local community the ethos and vision for the school through its mission statement.

The Home-School agreement also gives an ideal opportunity to make the Christian character of the school and its values clear to parents.

Admissions

As the "Admissions Authority" for the school, foundation governors must produce an admissions policy. This should express the values and mission of the school, clearly reflecting the Christian nature of the school community.

Foundation governors can make a positive contribution to the overall plans for school development and improvement ensuring that any policies are consistent with its Christian character, particularly in the following areas:

-  Performance Management



Governor Guidance : VA Schools – *Membership of the Governing Body*

- + School Development
- + Asset Management of School Buildings

The School Development Plan is an important aspect of the school as it identifies strategies which will help to achieve the agreed vision, aims and objectives. It is in this planning that priority areas for development are identified and resources are allocated appropriately.

The governing body, in partnership with the headteacher, establishes and reviews key policies.

Foundation governors can make a significant contribution to the following in particular:

- + Curriculum - ensuring that it is balanced and broadly based;
- + Collective Worship is provided daily in accordance with the custom and practice of the Church of England
- + RE is provided and taught according to a syllabus which meets the requirements of the school's Trust Deed.
- + Behaviour - encouraging positive attitudes and developing good relationships within the school and a sense of mutual respect between all individuals, ensuring the feelings of all are met in equal measure, both inside and outside the classroom.
- + Equal Opportunities - ensuring that the educational opportunities are available for all pupils whatever their needs.
- + Personal, Social and Health Education
- + SMSC - ensuring that pupils are given the opportunity to develop spiritually and morally in a school which has a Christian basis for its values and moral standards.

The Foundation Governor – a Critical Friend

All governors need to examine evidence showing how well the school is progressing, but it is important to carry out this role in a positive manner. This is done by forming a good working relationship with the headteacher and staff, celebrating success and achievement and giving support and encouragement. To do this, governors need to know a good deal about the school and its working environment. Foundation governors can play a very important part here by taking advantage of the opportunities to involve themselves with the school in a variety of ways, particularly the following:

- + attending, assisting and monitoring collective worship;
- + assisting, where possible, in the RE and other class activities;
- + supporting and developing activities that link school and church;
- + keeping abreast of the changes and developments in education in order to have a deeper understanding of the issues affecting the school; (Governor training is available from a variety of agencies)
- + attending or supporting school events.

Other sources of evidence are the OFSTED inspection report and the SIAS report.



Governor Guidance : VA Schools – *Membership of the Governing Body*

Governing bodies of Aided schools are required under the Schools' Inspection Act 2005, Section 48, to report on areas not covered by OFSTED i.e.

Religious Education;

Collective Worship;

The Christian ethos of the school in relation to the Trust Deed;

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. (This is an area where the OFSTED inspection and the SIAS may overlap.)

These inspections can provide some evidence to show that the school is working towards its agreed aims and objectives. The subsequent action plan prioritises areas for development and targets resources. The contribution of the foundation governors towards the action plan can ensure the integrity of the school's Christian ethos.

Foundation Governors - Being Accountable

As the foundation governors of Aided schools are appointed by both the Diocesan Board of Education and the local parochial church council, it is important to create opportunities for them to communicate and report particularly on how the school is meeting the requirements of its Trust Deed and maintaining its Christian character.

This can be achieved in a variety of ways. For example:

- ✚ Involvement in the production of the school's prospectus
- ✚ Contributing to both the Ofsted and SIAS SEFs – self evaluation forms
- ✚ Strengthening links with the church community by keeping it informed of school issues and activities at parish meetings, through the magazine and other forms of parish news.

Finally

The Church's interest in education stems from a philosophy that education is not just about acquiring knowledge and earning a living. Church schools, and in particular Aided schools should also "provide a foundation of experience of the Christian life and a body of knowledge of the Christian faith that can sustain their pupils throughout their lives." - Dearing Report, 2001.

The contribution and role of the foundation governors is very important in establishing a school which offers opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually and morally and to explore the Christian faith while respecting the beliefs and practices of others. The church school should be an inclusive community where everyone is valued and reflects God's love for the whole world.