



Membership of the Governing Body

Foundation governors in Voluntary Controlled schools form approximately one quarter of the governing body. Their inclusion on the governing bodies is one of the distinguishing characteristics of a church school. They are appointed by the Diocesan Board of Education usually after nomination from the local church community through the incumbent in order to continue the tradition of links between school, church and the wider community. As they are in the minority there is great responsibility on these governors to try to ensure the continuation of the character and ethos of the school.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Foundation Governors

Foundation governors in Voluntary Controlled 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.

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 Controlled 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

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. The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, Section 60(4) states that, in appointing a headteacher to a church Controlled or Foundation school, the governing body may have regard "to that person's ability and fitness to preserve and develop the religious character of the school".

In Controlled schools the Diocesan Director of Education usually has the same advisory rights as the Chief Education Officer of the Local Authority. In order that the



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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.

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

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 are nominated by the local church community, it is important to create opportunities whereby they can communicate and report particularly on how the school is 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 should "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.