



Become a school governor in Brighton & Hove

What do school governors do?

Governors work with the headteacher and senior leadership team in the strategic development of the school and in raising standards of achievement. Duties include setting the school's vision, aims & objectives, approving the school budget and appointing the headteacher. Governors must be able to support and challenge the headteacher, so need to gain an understanding of the school's overall performance in order to explain its decisions and actions. Governing boards work as a team and make collective decisions.

Who are school governors?

School governors are the largest volunteer group in the country, with Brighton & Hove having over 800 governor positions across 70 schools. Governing boards need a good balance of skills and experience:

- **Parent governors** are elected by parents/carers of children at the school. The school organises elections when there is a resignation or a governor's term of office expires.
- **Staff governors** are elected by the teaching and support staff at the school. The headteacher also being a member of the governing board by virtue of their office
- **Co-opted governors** are appointed by the governing board according to their skills or experience. Prospective candidates will normally meet with the Chair of Governors first and then a collective decision will be made at a full governing board meeting.
- **Foundation governors** are appointed by the relevant Diocese in church schools.
Church of England: Diocese of Chichester, 211 New Church Road, Hove BN3 4ED
Catholic: Diocese of Arundel and Brighton, 4 Southgate Drive, Crawley RH10 6RP
- **Local authority (LA) governors** are nominated to the governing body by a local authority panel of cross-party councillors and the Assistant Director (Education & Skills). LA governors normally have experience in education, governance or children's services and should be aware of any local/national priorities.

What skills, knowledge and experience do I need?

You may not need specific skills, unless you have been co-opted for a particular reason. However, all governors must:

- Be prepared to contribute to discussions, offering challenge and support
- Have an interest in the welfare of children and their education
- Be willing to learn and attend relevant training
- Have good interpersonal, teamwork and communication skills
- Have a respect for confidentiality
- Be committed to equal opportunities
- Have a willingness to fulfil the role of the governor with energy and enthusiasm and a commitment to attend governors' meetings regularly

In addition to these skills, we are keen to ensure that the membership of our governing boards reflects the diversity of the pupils in our schools and communities. Therefore, we welcome applications from under-represented groups, particularly from black or minority ethnic backgrounds. We are also keen to recruit younger governors, as a recent national survey showed that only 10% of governors were in the 18-40 age range, yet this group has had more recent experience of education and could have a lot to offer.

What is the time commitment?

Governing boards usually meet together once or twice a term. There may also be committee meetings to attend (eg Resources or Curriculum). If you do have a particular expertise, this is where your skills could be of use. You may also volunteer to work alongside a member of staff who has a specific responsibility – eg special educational needs. The time commitment varies but in the beginning you should expect to spend around 10 days a year on duties. This could increase to around 20 days if you take on a key role such as chairing (equating to half a day per week during term time) or more when recruiting a headteacher.

Is training provided?

Brighton & Hove's School & Governance Development Team provides phone advice and guidance to clerks and governors, as well as induction and further training – all this is free of charge to the individual. There are also regular briefings to update you on national and local developments. For more information, go to <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/governors>.

Being a representative

Governors do not go to meetings with instructions from their stakeholder group (eg parents or staff) about how to vote. They bring the voice of a representative member of their group, so should understand the key views of their group in order to inform their governing board. They then vote after they have heard all the views, in accordance with what is in the best interests of the pupils in the school. Once a collective decision has been made, all governors must accept it as being the majority view and be loyal to that view.

What's in it for me?

You will gain some valuable experiences that will have an impact on your personal and professional life. You will meet new people, develop teamwork skills and learn more about how schools work. You could gain experience of budget setting, interviewing for staff or developing policies. If you eventually become a chair of governors, we provide support and training to develop your leadership skills and confidence.

Above all, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have made a real difference to the development of children, young people, their school and the community.

What should I do next?

Contact the School & Governance Development Team, who can advise on current vacancies and identify which positions may be the most appropriate according to your preferred location and skills. You will be asked to complete an application form that can then be forwarded to the governing board.

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