



ST ALPHEGE CE INFANT SCHOOL

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Guide to being a governor at St Alphege

Introduction

Governors are people who wish to make a positive contribution to the school and the education of its children. School governors are the largest volunteer force in the country. About 1% of the adult population serve as governors at any one time. The governing body of St Alphege CE Infant School has 13 governors; four parents, three Foundation governors, three from the wider local community, one staff governor and one LA appointed governor in addition to the Headteacher.

The Department for Education are very clear that the purpose of school governing bodies is to *'conduct the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement at the school'*.

More specifically governing bodies should have a strong focus on three core strategic functions:

- *Setting the school's vision, ethos and strategic direction;*
- *Holding the head teacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils; and the performance management of staff;*
- *Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.*

This guide aims to try and set out the reality of being a governor so that potential governors can understand the role better.

What a governor does

As part of the governing body team, a governor is expected to:

1. Contribute to the strategic discussions at governing body meetings which determine:
 - The vision and ethos of the school;
 - Clear and ambitious strategic priorities and targets for the school;
 - That all children, including those with special educational needs, have access to a broad and balanced curriculum;
 - The school's budget, including the expenditure of the pupil premium allocation;
 - The school's staffing structure and key staffing policies;
 - The principles to be used by school leaders to set other school policies.
2. Hold the senior leaders to account by monitoring the school's performance; this includes:
 - Agreeing the outcomes from the school's self-evaluation and ensuring they are used to inform the priorities in the school development plan;



- Considering all relevant data (including monitoring data) and feedback provided on request by school leaders and external sources on all aspects of school performance;
- Asking challenging questions of school leaders;
- Ensuring senior leaders have developed the required policies and procedures and the school is operating effectively according to those policies;
- Listening to and reporting to the school's stakeholders: pupils, parents, staff, and the wider community.

3. Ensure the school staff have the resources and support they require to do their jobs well, including the necessary expertise on business management, external advice where necessary, effective appraisal and CPD (Continuing Professional Development), and suitable premises, and that the way in which those resources are used has impact.

4. When required, serve on panels of governors to:

- Appoint the head teacher and other senior leaders;
- Appraise the head teacher;
- Set the head teacher's pay and agree the pay recommendations for other staff;
- Hear the second stage of staff grievances and disciplinary matters;
- Hear appeals about pupil exclusions.

The role of governor is largely a thinking and questioning role, not a doing role. A governor does NOT:

- Undertake audits of any sort – whether financial or health & safety - even if the governor has the relevant professional experience;
- Spend much time with the pupils of the school – if you want to work directly with children, there are many other voluntary valuable roles within the school;
- Fundraise – this is the role of the Friends – the governing body should consider income streams and the potential for income generation, but not carry out fundraising tasks;
- Undertake classroom observations to make judgements on the quality of teaching – the governing body monitors the quality of teaching in the school by requiring data from the senior staff and from external sources;
- Do the job of the school staff – if there is not enough capacity within the paid staff team to carry out the necessary tasks, the governing body need to consider and rectify this.

Expectations of a governor

In order to perform their role well, a governor is expected to:

- Get to know the school, including by visiting the school occasionally during school hours, and gain a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses;
- Attend induction training and regular relevant training and development events;
- Attend meetings (full governing body meetings and committee meetings) and read all the papers before the meeting so they are able to contribute to discussions;
- Undertake 'link visits' with curriculum/strategic area leads at the school to better understand the part of the schools' performance they are responsible for and monitor progress in this area.
- Act in the best interest of all the pupils of the school; and
- Behave in a professional manner, as set down in the governing body's code of conduct, including acting in strict confidence.

Time commitment: The average time commitment is about 10-15 hours per term. This includes meetings, background reading and school visits.



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Expenses: Governors may receive out of pocket expenses incurred as a result of fulfilling their role as governor, and this is contained within the expenses policy.

Why become a governor

Governors are important members of the school leadership team and their contribution is assessed by Ofsted within the 'effectiveness of leadership and management' element of an inspection. Whilst there is a work associated with performing the role well, there are also lots of benefits to being a governor. This is what some of our current governors said when asked why they liked being a governor:

"I have developed new skills and I enjoy being part of a friendly and fun team that works together to improve the opportunities for everyone at the school." - Mark

"As a parent governor I like to feel that I am repaying the school for the nurture and support they have shown my son whilst in their care." - Claire

"I have learned so much being a governor. I love seeing more of the 'bigger picture' of education in our community, and knowing that in a small way I am making a positive difference." – Rachel

As well as helping the school and the wider community there are benefits to you by being a governor. These include professional development benefits such as learning new skills and gaining expertise in new areas, as well as broader social benefits such as a sense of achievement and working as part of a team.

If you would like to find out more please e-mail the Chair of Governors at:
simon.coulton@st-alphege.kent.sch.uk

