

St Angela's Ursuline School
The role of Parent Governors on the Governing Body

Parent governors play a vital role in Governing bodies, holding the unique position of having a parental viewpoint of the school.

Through the children, they have a first hand experience of the delivery of the curriculum, and how the school is perceived from the 'consumers' point of view.

This enables parent governors to bring a different perspective to the strategic management of the school.

It is important for parent governors to establish a rapport with the parental body which elected him/her, whilst continuing to maintain a strategic approach to school governance. Although being available to advise parents on appropriate routes of action is a very important aspect of the role, it is vital that parent governors do not personally become involved in individual concerns.

Apart from the possibility of this jeopardising appropriate complaints and appeals procedures, no governor has the authority to act individually on behalf of the school.

Parent governors are representative parents rather than representatives of parents.

To effectively fulfil the role, parent governors should:

- make themselves known to the parent body
- try to attend in-service training sessions
- listen impartially to concerns raised by parents
- guide parents regarding appropriate lines of action and procedures
- present a balanced view of issues, representing different sections of the community

Achieving a balance between being the impartial representative parent and the often emotional issues relating to individual children's education, can sometimes be very difficult. Some practical ways to achieve this balance include:

- make yourself available to parents
- never press your own child's case at the expense of others
- never promise to 'solve a problem' on your own
- be wary of bringing an individual's issue to meetings without following the agreed procedures
- abide by the agreed protocol regarding agenda items and Any Other Business
- keep yourself aware of parental views and concerns
- play an active part in governor meetings

Although this is a very delicate role, there is ample support and training available. Effective parent governors will find working alongside the other members of the governing body both interesting and rewarding in that their efforts will ensure that the work of the governing body fulfils its duties to all children.

Who is eligible to stand as a governors in a school

A governor must be aged 18 or over at the time of their election or appointment and cannot be a registered pupil at the school. A person cannot hold more than one governorship at the same school.

A person is disqualified from holding or from continuing to hold office as a governor if he or she:

- fails to attend the governing body meetings – without the consent of the governing body – for a continuous period of six months, beginning with the date of the first meeting missed (not applicable to ex officio governors);
- is subject to a bankruptcy restrictions order, an interim bankruptcy restrictions order, a debt relief restrictions order or an interim debt relief restrictions order;
- has had their estate sequestrated and the sequestration order has not been discharged, annulled or reduced;
- is subject to:
 - i) a disqualification order or disqualification undertaking under the Company Directors Act 1986
 - ii) a disqualification order under Part 2 of the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1989
 - iii) a disqualification undertaking accepted under the Company Directors Disqualification (Northern Ireland) Order 2002
 - iv) an order made under Section 492(2)(b) of the Insolvency Act 1986 (failure to pay under a County Court administration order);
- has been removed from the office of charity trustee or trustee for a charity by the Charity Commissioners or High Court on grounds of any misconduct or mismanagement, or under Section 34 of the Charities and Trustees Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 from participating in the management or control of any body;
- is included in the list of people considered by the Secretary of State as unsuitable to work with children;
- is disqualified from working with children or subject to a direction under Section 142 of the Education Act 2002;
- is disqualified from registration for childminding or providing day care;
- is disqualified from registration under Part 3 of the Childcare Act 2006;
- has received a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of not less than three months (without the option of a fine) in the five years before becoming a governor or since becoming a governor;
- has received a prison sentence of two-and-a-half years or more in the 20 years before becoming a governor;
- has at any time received a prison sentence of five years or more;
- has been fined for causing a nuisance or disturbance on school premises during the five years prior to or since appointment or election as a governor;
- refuses to allow an application to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) for a DBS check.