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**Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education**

Guide for Foundation Governors



Thank you for putting yourself forward as a Foundation Governor. The Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) is extremely grateful for your support as a Foundation Governor in the Diocese of Lichfield.



# THE DIOCESE ARE HERE TO HELP!



Don't forget that we are here to support you.

We have a team of professionals who are here to support you in a number of areas including:

- ⊕ Christian distinctiveness
- ⊕ RE and Collective Worship
- ⊕ SIAMS
- ⊕ Church school governance
- ⊕ Appointment and appraisal of headteachers
- ⊕ School buildings

# Getting to grips with a Church of England school

Church of England schools, whatever their status, differ from most other maintained schools in a number of ways. For example:

- ⊕ The Instrument of Government of a Church of England school will contain a faith-based ethos statement and provide for the appointment of Foundation Governors.
- ⊕ The site and buildings of a Church of England school are usually owned by site trustees, except for the playing fields. The trustees (who might, for example, be the Lichfield Diocesan Board of Finance, or the vicar and churchwardens) hold the land for the specific purposes as specified in their trust deed and have a responsibility to ensure that the activities on the site comply with the requirements of the trust deed. Playing fields and any structures thereon are usually owned by the Local Authority.
- ⊕ Church of England schools must provide a daily act of Collective Worship. That daily act must be in accordance with the school's trust deed/the Anglican tradition.
- ⊕ A high importance should be given to the study of Religious Education, with RE being a core subject within the school.

# WHAT MAKES A CHURCH SCHOOL DISTINCTIVE AND DIFFERENT?

Whilst every school is distinctive and different in some ways, the question of distinctiveness is frequently asked with reference to Church schools. Church schools should be driven by a distinctive Christian vision. They should be distinctive in their Collective Worship and Religious Education offering, their ethos, and the ways in which their distinctively Christian values are worked into the daily life of the school. Some of the ways in which this might be seen might include:

- ✚ A theologically rooted Christian vision which is 'lived not laminated' and may be embodied by Christian values;
- ✚ A deliberate attempt to root the life of the school in Biblical teaching;
- ✚ A place where all are valued as individuals and as God's children;
- ✚ A safe place where there is no ideological pressure and yet Christian foundations underpin the ethos, relationships and curriculum;
- ✚ A place where learning and the acquiring of skills are seen as a part of the revelation of God and His continuous involvement in His creation;
- ✚ Valuing of all, including those of other faiths and those of no faith;
- ✚ Effective links with the local Church, Diocese and local community;
- ✚ Visible signs and symbols of its Christian foundation around the school;
- ✚ An inclusive place where selfless care and Christian love is apparent to all;
- ✚ Collective Worship which is inclusive, invitational and inspirational and provides both adults and children opportunities to grow spiritually;
- ✚ High quality Religious Education that is seen as an important part of the curriculum and a core subject;
- ✚ A commitment to developing the spiritual dimension both in the formal and the hidden curriculum;
- ✚ A place that takes the views of all the members of its community seriously and where the voice of the weakest is heard.

# The Statutory Role of Governors

Foundation Governors have a responsibility to their school, their pupils and their communities to support the school to be effective in terms of achieving and exceeding the standards expected by government.

Foundation Governors, who will take on the full responsibilities of being a school Governor, will need to have the skills and otherwise be able to contribute appropriately to the Governing Body and the effective governance of the school.

The Government provides detailed guidance on the role of a Governor in its “Governor’s Handbook” (the latest version plus updates can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook>.

The Handbook identifies the following three core strategic functions of Governing Bodies:

- ✚ Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- ✚ Holding the executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance management of staff;
- ✚ Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.

Further supportive information can be found here:

<https://governorsforschools.org.uk/guidance-and-further-reading-for-new-governors/>

# The Role of Foundation Governors

The role of governor in schools today is challenging and yet many find the opportunity to serve the school in the community extremely rewarding. The Church School is an example of the Church working in the community and working for the community. Many Christians find that governorship offers an opportunity to serve the community and gain a great deal of satisfaction from bringing their own skills and experiences to the many issues that face the Church School.

The term of office is usually **four years**.

The expectation is that your church school will seek to offer excellence in education and will above all be concerned to develop the whole human being in a place where the Christian faith is lived daily. As a Foundation Governor, you will be ensuring that this is happening.

Foundation Governors have a particular role in monitoring and evaluating the Christian character and spiritual aspects of the school. You must be familiar with the SIAMS framework and inspection process and be aware of when the last inspection took place.

In church schools, Governors are guardians of the school vision, keeping it alive and ensuring that it is implemented. Governors are also responsible for ensuring that the school upholds its Trust Deed which sets out exactly what it means to be a church school.

# What do Foundation Governors do in practice?

Foundation Governors are unique to schools that have a religious character, such as church schools. The National Society stated in 1996 that Foundation Governors are there to 'explore with their partners on the governing board ways in which the church's role in the school may be more fully and positively implemented'. (Green 2016:16)

All Foundation Governors have a particular purpose to safeguard the Christian character of the school and ensure it is conducted in accordance with any founding documents.

## Foundation Governors should:

- ✚ Understand the distinctive nature and history of the Church of England.
- ✚ Protect and develop the distinctive Christian character of the school.
- ✚ Develop and monitor the impact of the schools theologically rooted Christian vision.
- ✚ Make sure that the school is conducted in accordance with the Trust Deed.
- ✚ Be a member of the governing body team and play a full and active part.
- ✚ Liaise with the parish, PCC and incumbent in promoting links between church and school.
- ✚ Initiate discussion on how the local church can support its school.
- ✚ Monitor and evaluate the impact of collective worship on pupils and staff.
- ✚ Monitor and evaluate the impact religious education has on the distinctive Christian character of the school and in a Voluntary Aided School or Academy the quality of teaching and learning in religious education.
- ✚ Ensure that the Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education is informed of any important changes that occur at the school, for example, the resignation and appointment of a Headteacher.
- ✚ Play a full part in the selection of a new Headteacher.
- ✚ Support school leaders in preparing for and be part of the Statutory Inspection of Anglican/Methodist Schools (SIAMS).
- ✚ Be a member of the group that appraises the headteacher in the Performance Management process.



# What do Foundation Governors do in practice?

You will need to complete the following governor training:

1. Called to serve as a school governor.
2. Thinking theologically.
3. Inclusive, Invitational, Inspiration Collective worship (CofE CW guidance in schools).
4. RE – Statement of entitlement into practice (supported with pupil voice tools).

As part of the role, you will need to be involved in monitoring what happens in school.

This might involve:

- ⊕ Attending worship
- ⊕ Sitting in on RE lessons
- ⊕ Meeting pupils and talking to them about school
- ⊕ Looking at books
- ⊕ Looking at planning
- ⊕ Reviewing progress and attainment data.

This is not about making judgements on the performance of individual staff or pupils but does ensure you are well informed about the school. You will be better placed to ask the right questions to support and challenge the leaders of the school and you will be more confident in taking far-reaching strategic decisions.

# When to Get in Contact With us

Whilst this is not an exhaustive list, we've set out below a brief checklist of some of the key times when Foundation Governors should get in touch with us.

- ✚ If a vacancy for a Headteacher occurs at the school – we can assist the Governing Body with advice about the new appointment. We would usually attend the shortlisting meeting to input into shortlisting process; be involved in the planning of the interview process; and attend the interview itself.
- ✚ If there are plans to alter or extend the school buildings – we can provide support and help you to ensure that any required trustee consents are in place.
- ✚ If a change is proposed to the composition of the Governing Body – we can provide advice and guidance. We will also need to approve any changes to the school's Instrument of Government.
- ✚ If you are considering entering structural arrangements with other schools and/or converting to an academy - so we can ensure that you have obtained our guidance and any necessary DBE/related consents.
- ✚ If a Foundation Governor resigns and we have not been notified - we can make sure this is picked up and we can seek recommendations for a replacement.
- ✚ If you have serious concerns about aspects of the school or its governance which you need to share.
- ✚ If there are any proposed changes to Admissions Policies in VA schools

**Thank you! Keep in touch and please contact us if you have any questions or worries about the role!**