

# **SOUTHWARK DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION**

*Developing Church of England Education*



## **FACTSHEET 3 – THE ROLE OF THE FOUNDATION GOVERNOR**

### **I INTRODUCTION**

**1.1** The composition of governing bodies of Church of England maintained schools is set out in Regulations and, in academies, in their Articles of Association. In voluntary aided (VA) schools, the foundation governors must be in a majority of two. In voluntary controlled (VC) and foundation church schools, there must be at least two foundation governors. Foundation governors are normally appointed for four years. Converter academies also have a majority of foundation governors appointed by those bodies who appointed foundation governors prior to conversion. In sponsor academies, a majority of governors are appointed by the sponsor with some appointments nominated by the Diocese; where the Diocesan Board of Education is a sponsor these will be foundation governors. In all cases Foundation governors will be expected to uphold and strengthen the Christian ethos and Church of England character of the school and also bring skills to the Governing Body which contribute to the success and effectiveness of the School.

### **2 TYPES OF FOUNDATION GOVERNOR**

**2.1** There are various routes by which a foundation governor may be appointed to a church school governing body:

- (i) - by virtue of being an incumbent of a parish with a church school;
- (ii) - via the Parochial Church Council (PCC);
- (iii) - via the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE);
- (iv) - via the local deanery synod;
- (v) - via any foundation body relating to the Trustees, or the original founders of the school.

### **3 THE ROLE OF THE INCUMBENT**

**3.1** Incumbents of parishes with a church school are normally ex officio foundation governors, particularly in the primary sector, that is, they are members of the governing body because they hold the office of incumbent. Church of England schools are part of the local worshipping community and are a key part of the local parish. It is hoped that all incumbents whose parish includes a Church of England school will feel able to take up his, or her, ex officio position on the governing body. Newly appointed incumbents will want to take time to work out their role in the school: as a governor, an incumbent has the same role and responsibilities as any other governor, but as incumbent, he or she will naturally play a pastoral role and will want to have an early discussion with the headteacher about how this might be fulfilled.

### **4 DIOCESAN REPRESENTATIVES ON GOVERNING BODIES**

**4.1** The Southwark Diocesan Board of Education usually appoints two representatives as foundation governors to each school governing body in the Diocese, although the pattern does vary and there is often only one Diocesan representative in a voluntary controlled school. Where there is a vacancy for a Diocesan representative, nominations may be invited from the incumbent of the parish in which the school is situated, or put forward by the Diocesan Board. If a vacancy arises during an interregnum the Diocesan Board of Education will normally consult the Chair and Headteacher before proposing a new nominee.

**4.2** Diocesan Board representatives will be expected to put forward Diocesan Board of Education policy where pertinent to a particular issue of debate at governors' meetings. However, such representatives are not delegates and should there be a vote on any issue at a governors' meeting, in common with all their fellow governors, whether elected or appointed, they should vote according to their conscience. The Diocesan Board holds an annual meeting specifically for its representatives in order that they can be kept up-to-date with Board policy.

### **5 PCC AND OTHER FOUNDATION REPRESENTATIVES**

**5.1** As with Diocesan foundation governors those appointed by the Parochial Church Council (PCC), Deanery, or other foundation bodies are also simply representatives of those bodies, not delegates (see 4.2 above). Together with the Diocesan governors and incumbent (or other ex officio foundation governor) they make up the foundation governors of the school. All foundation appointing

bodies are required (under the 2012 regulations) to fill vacancies on the basis of the skills that governors brings and the contribution they will make to the effective governance and success of the school.

## **6 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF FOUNDATION GOVERNORS**

**6.1** All governors, whether appointed, elected, or ex officio, have the same duties and responsibilities. The responsibilities of church school governing bodies include - religious education, staffing, finance, and in VA and foundation schools and academies, admission of pupils and buildings and maintenance. Foundation governors are expected to have a particular concern for the religious education and collective worship in the school and in making financial decisions should recognise that religious education deserves full resourcing support.

**6.2** Foundation governors have a special responsibility for securing that the character of the school as a Church of England voluntary school is preserved and developed and that the school is conducted in accordance with the provisions of the school's Trust Deed and its ethos statement. The Trust Deed is a document that relates to the original foundation of the school and sets out the reasons why the school was first set up. It is not always readily available and some, which are over 100 years old are very difficult to read. Since 1999, all VA, VC and Foundation Church of England (C of E) schools have had an ethos statement as part of the Instrument of Government. The ethos statement relates to the school's Christian foundation and for C of E schools sets the context in which governors carry out their responsibilities. A copy of the ethos statement adopted by the majority of Church of England schools is reproduced below. Academies do not have an instrument of government, but there is nothing to prevent the Academy Trust adopting the ethos statement it had as a VA school.

### **C of E Ethos Statement**

*Recognising its historic foundation, the school will preserve and develop its religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England and in partnership with the Church at parish and diocesan level.*

*The school aims to serve its community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers to all its pupils.*

## **7 CHURCH SCHOOL ETHOS**

**7.1** The above statement serves a specific purpose as part of a legal document rooting the C of E maintained schools in their Christian foundation; the ethos statement is only relevant to those schools which have a religious character. All schools will, however, develop their own ethos whether or not they have a religious character and in broader terms it may be defined as the prevailing character, tone and spirit of an institution. Ethos is created and influenced by factors both inside and outside the school community. As these factors change, so the ethos of a school must be dynamic and open to review and appraisal. Schools exist in a changing society and are required to respond appropriately to its needs and expectations. The response of church schools will reflect their Christian foundation, but at the same time church schools will be mindful of the diversity of culture and faith which exists in society. All schools, urban and rural, primary and secondary should draw upon this diversity creatively and take the opportunity to celebrate the richness that it brings. The principles which govern the school's response to society's changing face are those which make for a loving, caring, accepting community that acknowledges the unique value of each individual both within the school community and society at large.

**7.2** Church of England schools do not have the monopoly on loving and caring relationships; nevertheless C of E schools are institutionally rooted in the Christian faith and are thus different from any other school. In seeking to preserve the religious character of their schools, foundation governors will want to contribute to sustaining, developing and nurturing the school's Christian ethos. Governors of C of E VA, foundation schools and academies, through their legal right to appoint Christian staff, set the RE and worship policy and admit pupils from Christian families may create an institution in which the Christian faith is manifest through every aspect of school life. All C of E schools will aim to develop a corporate life which glorifies God in developing the full human potential of each person, whether pupil, member of staff, parent or governor. The governing body, particularly foundation governors, should seek to ensure that Christian principles are embedded in the policies and day to day life of the school.