



## **Becoming a School Governor**

This fact sheet can be made available in other languages or formats where appropriate by contacting 0161 770 6666 for further information please see our detailed fact sheet Information for all.

This fact sheet aims to provide details of how to become a School Governor in Oldham.

The Governor Support Team provides a comprehensive service of advice, support and training for school governors with a view to improving the quality of school governance to support the raising of pupil achievement.

### **What do school governors do?**

Governors work as a team. They are responsible for making sure the school provides a good quality education. Raising educational standards in school is now a key priority. This has the best chance of happening when there are high expectations of what pupils can achieve.

Governors also promote effective ways of teaching and learning when setting the schools aims and policies. They do this together with the Headteacher, who is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school.

Headteachers are chosen by governors – and most Headteachers choose to be governors themselves.

The governing body's main role is to help raise standards of achievement.

It:

is accountable for the performance of the school to parents and the wider community

plans the school's future direction

selects the Headteacher

makes decisions on the school's budget and staffing

makes sure the National Curriculum is taught

decides how the school can encourage pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development

makes sure the school provides for all its pupils, including those with special needs.

## **Who are School Governors?**

Every school has a governing body. It will include:

parents elected by other parents at the school

staff governors (both teaching and support staff) elected by, and from, their colleagues

local authority governors

a governor approached by other members of the governing body

the Headteacher if they choose to be a governor

Representatives of the Church in Voluntary Aided/Controlled schools.

## **How do governing bodies operate?**

Governors are at the heart of how a school operates. It's important they get things right. How they do their job affects the interests of pupils, staff morale and how the school is seen by parents and others in the community.

Governors support and challenge Headteachers by gathering views, asking questions and deciding what's best for the school. They are not there to rubber stamp decisions. They have to be prepared to give and take and be loyal to decisions taken by the governing body as a whole. So long as they act within the law governors are protected from any financial liability for the decisions they take.

A governing body is not a supporters club. Governors are responsible for how the school is performing. Following up inspection reports is an important job. Governors should try to be ahead of the game – identifying problems and tackling them in advance.

### **What qualifications do governors need?**

You don't need any special qualification to be a school governor. Schools are keen to attract people in the community who can bring energy, experience and fresh ideas. Those who would make very good governors may be put off because they think they need to be an expert. Not so – interest, enthusiasm and commitment are much more important.

Governors bring a range of experience and interests from many walks of life. They need to work closely with others to make good decisions – and make sure their decisions are followed up. It helps to be a good listener – you will stand a much better chance of understanding how the school ticks.

### **What training and support are available?**

Help and advice is available from a number of sources and includes: comprehensive training and advice is offered by the staff of the Governor Support Team.

Guidance is issued by Central Government through the Department for Children, Schools and Families. National Governor Organisations also offer information.

### **What about time off work to be a governor?**

Many employers encourage staff to become school governors. They realise that the skills gained from being a governor are transferable to the workplace.

School governors have a legal right to reasonable unpaid leave from their employer.

### **Realistically, how much time would be needed to properly do the work of a school governor?**

Governors need to be able to devote time to attend meetings and to read papers. It needn't be daunting – but you have got to have some time to set aside. The amount of time varies – but governing bodies are not looking for passengers who want the status without putting in the work.

The time you devote can vary widely, depending on how involved you become and what needs doing. Being a governor involves more than just taking an interest, though this is a crucial part of the job.

The governing body usually meets at least once a term. You would probably also sit on one or two committees dealing with:

finance

staffing

curriculum

premises

A governor can also have responsibility for working alongside staff on how literacy or numeracy can be improved. One governor also oversees

measures designed to make sure children with special needs are being properly catered for.

Sometimes governors have to make difficult decisions about individual pupils or members of staff. At times it can be hard work – but governors are never expected to work without help and support from others, inside the school and out.

### **How long do governors serve?**

Governors normally serve for a term of office lasting four years but you can of course resign at any time after you are elected or appointed.

### **I would like to become a school governor. What should I do?**

You can either contact the school where you would like to become a governor or contact the Governor Support Team, Centre for Professional Development, Rosary Road, Fitton Hill, Oldham, OL8 2QE. Telephone 0161 770 3639/3640. Fax 0161 770 3641 E-Mail: [gst@oldham.gov.uk](mailto:gst@oldham.gov.uk)

### **I am not yet a governor but I would like to come to some governor training to find out more. Can I do this?**

Yes. From time to time the Governor Support Team hold sessions for those persons who are considering becoming governors but have not yet committed themselves to being appointed or elected to a school. Alternatively, induction training is arranged on a termly basis and you would be very welcome to attend one of these sessions before deciding whether or not to take on this role.

## **I am not a parent of a school-aged child can I still be a school governor?**

You certainly don't need to be a parent to have the makings of a good governor. Retired people and those involved in the local business community have much to offer. If you've never thought of putting yourself forward, but believe schools should give children the best start, ask yourself the following questions:

Do you want to put something back into your local community?

Are you interested in people?

Are you prepared to work as part of a team?

Do you have the time to get to know your school, to go to meetings and read papers?

Are you comfortable asking questions?

Are you open to new ideas and ready to learn?

Do you want children to get the best from school?

If you can answer Yes and live in the area, then you could well have what it takes to be a school governor, and help make a difference to our children's future.

## **How do I find out more?**

Write to: The Governor Support Team,  
Business Support Service,  
Centre for Professional Development,  
Rosary Road,  
Fitton Hill,  
Oldham,  
OL8 2QE.

Telephone: 0161 770 3639/1629

Fax: 0161 770 3641

E-Mail: [gst@oldham.gov.uk](mailto:gst@oldham.gov.uk)

We want to provide good quality services for people in Oldham and as we are a public service you have a say in what we do. We want you to be completely satisfied with our services but to ensure this we need to know what you think. What we do best? Where could we improve things? Do you have any ideas or suggestions? Only by listening to you can we give you the service you deserve.

If you wish to make a comment about our services you can email us on [customer.feedback@oldham.gov.uk](mailto:customer.feedback@oldham.gov.uk) or you can phone us on 0161 770 4191 or you can write to: Complaints Officer

Chief Executives Department

PO Box 160

Civic Centre

Oldham

OL1 1UG

**July 2008 OCFS Child IMP2S (Version 5) PID 029 KC**