

## PARENT GOVERNOR ELECTION POLICY

### Introduction

Parent governors are elected by parents and carers of registered pupils on the school role. They should be parents or carers of pupils currently at the school at the time of their election and may complete their four-year term of office even if their child leaves the school during that period.

Parent Governors are representatives of the parent body but the views they express at meetings are their own. All governors have equal standing.

### Who can stand and who can vote for parent governors?

The definition of a parent in the Education Acts includes:

- all natural parents whether they are married or not
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person and
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

A list of the current regulations regarding disqualification of school governors will be included with the application form and is available at any time from the Clerk.

In addition to the above regulations a Parent Governor is disqualified from election or appointment if:

- they are an elected member of the local authority;
- they work at the school for more than 500 hours in a school year.

### Seeking nominations

As soon as a resignation is received from a parent governor, or at the beginning of the term in which a parent governor's term of office expires, the Clerk to Governors (the Clerk) will send a letter to parents inviting applications for the post. The standard letter (see Appendix 1) covers the information which must be sent to all those believed to have parental responsibility for children at the school.

Where pupils have more than one person with parental responsibility living at a different address, a letter should be sent to each address.

A copy of this policy will be displayed on the school notice board and drawn to the attention of parents in the letter.

Where a vacancy arises at short notice, the letter should be sent as soon as possible. Where this situation arises near the end of the summer term, this process will be delayed until the beginning of the next term. It is important that all those interested in standing as governors should be asked to complete the official School Governor Application Form (see Appendix 2), which should have the disqualification regulations recorded on the reverse, to ensure that all potential governors are aware of the disqualification regulations prior to seeking nominations.

Prospective Governors are invited to submit a written statement outlining the reason(s) why a parent may wish to vote for them, in no more than 100 words. This statement will then be circulated with the ballot paper.

### **Closing date for applications**

The closing date for applications should be a maximum 15 (fifteen) school working days from the date on which letters are distributed. The actual closing date and time should be clearly stated in the letter and on the application form.

### **What happens on the Closing Date?**

On the closing date, if the number of applications is equal to, or less than the number of vacancies to be filled, a ballot need not be held. The applicants are automatically elected.

The Clerk will notify the successful candidates, within three school working days. Please move to the section 'After the Election' towards the end of this Policy.

If there are more applications than there are vacancies, the Clerk will arrange for a secret ballot to be held.

### **If no applications are received**

If after seeking applications from parents of current pupils, vacancies for parent governors still remain, the guidelines should be followed as outlined in 'A Guide to the Law for School Governors' Section 2, Parent Governors.

If there are still parent vacancies after the governing body has considered any candidates for appointment, the headteacher will need to go back to the parents to request further applications.

## **The ballot**

The Clerk will issue ballot papers to all eligible parents as soon as possible after the closing date for the receipt of applications. Ten school working days will be allowed between the ballot papers being sent out and the last date for their return. The return deadline date and time should be clearly stated on the ballot papers.

The election should be held by secret ballot. Ballot papers themselves should not be signed or the voter identified in any way.

The use of the following Double Envelope System will be followed:

1. Each address will be sent a large envelope which has been numbered by the Clerk.
2. Each ballot paper will be accompanied by a small, unmarked envelope.
3. Each voter seals the ballot paper in the unmarked envelope.
4. The unmarked envelopes are sealed in the large, numbered envelope.
5. The large envelope is returned to the school.
6. On receipt of the ballot papers, the Clerk will check the number on the large envelope against the list of those entitled to vote and ticks off the relevant name.
7. The outer envelope is removed and the inner envelope placed in the ballot box for counting at the appointed time. The ballot box will be kept securely until the official count.

## **Voting**

A parent will have one vote, even if they have more than one child in the school.

The Clerk will arrange to get ballot papers to and from parents by pupil post where possible. Where a pupil does not live with a person who has parental responsibility, or they are absent from school when the ballot papers are issued they will need to be posted.

If a ballot paper is returned and it is not possible to confirm it is from a person entitled to vote it should be treated as void.

Ballot papers will be kept unopened and secure until the count.

Candidates have the right to attend the count, and must be advised of the venue, date and time of the count at the same time as the ballot papers are sent out.

**The count**

The Count will be held within five school working days after the closing date for the return of ballot papers, as notified to the candidates. If this is not possible then the reasons for the delay shall be explained to all candidates and their agreement to the delay obtained.

The Returning Officer shall be appointed by the Chairman of Governors and will be an existing Board Member or the Clerk to Governors. A member of the Board of Governors will be present.

If there is a tie in the numbers of votes cast, the ballot papers will be recounted. If the votes are still equal for two or more candidates, the Returning Officer will arrange for those candidates to address the next Board Meeting to give a presentation to the full Board for no more than 5 minutes each. There will then be a secret ballot presided over by the Clerk. If the votes are still equal after a further recount, then the Chairman will have the deciding vote. Only Governors attending the meeting shall be permitted to vote, and the Board Meeting must be quorate.

**After the election**

The Clerk will notify the result to any candidate not at the count within three school working days.

The Clerk will follow the guidelines established for the appointment of new governors including the necessary identification checks.

All parents will be notified of the result in the next school Newsletter. Governors and all members of staff should also be notified.

**The start date**

The successful candidates will be appointed on the day after the end of the term of office of the retiring parent governor. If the position is already vacant the appointment date will be the day following the count or the day after the closing date for applications if an election has not been necessary.

When parent governors are appointed by the governing body their term of office begins at the meeting of the board.

### **Unsuccessful candidates**

Any unsuccessful candidates should be thanked for their interest and encouraged to consider other categories of governorship or vacancies at other schools.

Should they wish to proceed further with becoming a governor at this school, they should contact the Chairman of Governors.

The Chairman of Governors will discuss the situation at the next full board meeting when the candidate could be considered as an Associate Member of the board. The Chairman will also contact the candidate if a vacancy for a parent governor occurs within the following twelve months and an invitation to reapply made.

For governorships at other schools, the Solihull MBC Governor Services Unit should be contacted.

### **Mentoring of all new Governors**

All new Governors will be contacted by the Chairman of Governors with the offer that an existing board member will act as their mentor. The newly elected Governor should be able to choose from a list of suitable governors. This process should start prior to the date of the next board meeting and the purpose is to help the new governor feel more able to make a valid contribution as soon as possible.

<b>Appendices:</b>	1	Sample Vacancy Announcement
	2	Parent Governor Application
	3	Sample Ballot Letter
	4	Sample Ballot Paper
	5	Sample Letter to Candidates

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**Chairman of Governors**

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**Date**