

LEICESTER DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

THE ROLE OF THE CHAIR OF GOVERNORS

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The chair of governors and the clerk have the main roles at governors' meetings, but the role of the chair of governors is not simply to chair the meetings and to some it can seem daunting. In a church school it is expected that the chair will keep the school's Christian ethos at the forefront of the governors' work, though this is a responsibility shared by the foundation governors and the whole governing body. It is vital that the governing body does not expect the chair to do everything on its behalf; the workload of governing bodies is such that it must be shared and while the chair, inevitably, takes on extra responsibilities it should not be without the support of his or her fellow governors. The vice-chair also plays a key role in supporting the chair and sharing the workload and is not simply there to take control of meetings in the chair's absence.

2. THE ROLE OF THE CHAIR AT MEETINGS

The chair directs and controls the meetings and generally attempts to ensure that it works effectively to reach the decisions necessary to govern the school. It is recommended that the chair and vice-chair are elected, annually, at the first governors' meeting of the autumn term although there is some flexibility in this. All full members of the governing body are eligible for these offices, except an employee of the governing body, or a pupil. The following list gives the chair's main responsibilities in relation to governors' meetings:

- (a) to liaise with the headteacher and clerk to draw up the agenda: it is helpful for the chair and headteacher to go through the agenda and the headteacher's report, prior to the meeting, in order that both may be alerted to the key issues;
- (b) to arrange for prayers to be said at the start of the meeting;
- (c) to formally declare the meeting open and to state its business;
- (d) to ensure that the minutes of the previous meeting are an accurate reflection of what took place;
- (e) to maintain order and ensure that everyone has an opportunity to comment and that discussion is relevant and stays within the powers and remit of the governing body;
- (f) to give decisions on points of order, formulate proposals or resolutions as appropriate;
- (g) to sum up the arguments of discussion, in an unbiased manner, to reflect the consensus view before putting matters to the vote;
- (h) to report on any urgent action taken between meetings;
- (i) to keep the meeting strictly to time as far as possible;
- (j) to adjourn a topic or meeting if necessary.

3. EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

3.1 Certain general principles can be applied to try to ensure that meetings are effective:

- (a) there is a specific purpose for holding the meeting;
- (b) the agenda is realistic, given the time available, consideration should be given to allocating a period of time for each agenda item;
- (c) the purpose of each agenda item is indicated and governors are clear about what is expected of them, eg. report to be received, for discussion and decision, for information etc;
- (d) minor items are dealt with quickly allowing sufficient time for more important items;
- (e) expertise is available to provide technical information where necessary;
- (f) conclusions reached and follow-up actions are monitored carefully to ensure they are implemented;
- (g) there is a good atmosphere, based on team spirit that leads to a collective approach to problem-solving and decision making;
- (h) punctuality is encouraged;
- (i) Any Other Business is kept to a minimum, no vote should ever be taken on an issue under this heading.

3.2 The chair should encourage debate at meetings, but not allow a minority of governors to dominate; often a quiet word after the meeting to an over-dominant governor is all that is necessary. Governors need to feel that they have had an opportunity to make a contribution, however small. It is important for a chair to encourage those who lack confidence, or fear that they are simply repeating the views of others, only then can a chair gauge the views of the whole governing body.

4. CHAIR'S ACTION

4.1 There may be occasions when it is necessary for the chair (or if she/he is unavailable, the vice-chair) to take urgent action. The chair (or vice-chair) has power to act on behalf of the governing body in discharging those functions which regulations allow the governing body to delegate to a committee, individual governor or the headteacher. Those circumstances are where a delay would be likely to be seriously detrimental to the interests of the school, or to the interests of any registered pupil, his/her parent, or a person employed at the school. Essentially, a delay means that it is impracticable for the governors to meet before such seriously detrimental effects are felt.

5. THE CHAIR'S ROLE

5.1 The chair plays a key role in encouraging a corporate spirit in the governing body and in assisting new governors to get to know the school and understanding their role. The chair should meet regularly with the headteacher to discuss current issues, problems and new ideas and will wish to establish good relationships with the staff. The chair plays a vital part in

supporting the school and, in particular, the headteacher who may at times feel isolated. Sometimes this will mean just listening, at other times, taking positive action; It will certainly involve a good deal of time and commitment in getting to know the school, the staff and the pupils.

- 5.2** The chair of governors should have a vision for the school and its future development