

LEICESTER DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

THE ROLE OF THE FOUNDATION GOVERNOR

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The composition of governing bodies of church schools is set out in Regulations. 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 or up to one-quarter of the membership. Foundation governors are normally appointed for four years.

2. TYPES OF FOUNDATION GOVERNORS

- 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, or occasionally the rural dean;
- 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.

- 2.2 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. 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. The church school is very much part of the worshipping community. Many incumbents take their role in relation to the church school very seriously and some are happy to take on the role of chair (if elected): others, for very valid reasons, feel that they can better serve the needs of the school, its staff and pupils if they do not take on that particular role.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF FOUNDATION GOVERNORS

- 3.1 Every governor whether appointed, elected or ex-officio has the same duties and responsibilities. As a corporate body, the responsibilities of church school governors include – religious education, staffing, finance and in VA and foundation schools, admission of pupils and buildings and maintenance. Foundation governors should have a particular concern for the religious education and collective worship in the

school and in making final decisions should recognise that religious education deserves full resourcing support. They should represent the Christian Ethos of the school on the governing body.

- 3.2** 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 church 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 church schools sets out 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:

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 with 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.

- 3.3** Foundation governors should be an effective liaison between the school and the local Christian Community.
- 3.4** An important part of the role of any governor is to have an interest in education matters be willing to become involved in the development of the school by for example participation at annual parents' meetings, sub groups – admissions, curriculum, finance etc.
- 3.5** Part of the role should be to take time to visit the school and get to know the staff and the children.

4. CHURCH SCHOOL ETHOS

- 4.1** The above statement serves a specific purpose as part of a legal document rooting the school in its Christian foundation; the ethos of the 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.

- 4.2** Church schools do not have the monopoly on loving and caring relationships, nevertheless the church school is institutionally rooted in the Christian faith and is thus different from any other school. In seeking to preserve the character of their schools, foundation governors will want to contribute to sustaining, developing and nurturing the school's Christian ethos. Governors of VA schools, through their legal right to appoint Christian staff and set the RE and worship policy may create an institution in which the Christian faith is manifest through every aspect of school life. Other types of church school also aim to develop a corporate life which attempts to glorify 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 policies and the day to day life of the school.

It is essential, in a Foundation Governor, that the following are true:

1. that the person is a committed Christian;
2. that the person is a regular worshipper either at the local parish church or at a church of another denomination, preferably in membership with Church Together in Leicestershire, that the nomination is approved by the PCC.
3. that the person has an interest in and concern for children;
4. that the person is able to understand and consider the issues facing the school without bias.