

Becoming a school governor

School governors provide critical challenge and support to the leadership team of a school with the ultimate aim of driving up standards. Acting as a school governor is a fantastic opportunity to have an impact on education and positively influence children's lives.

The role of a school governor

Make a difference

The fundamental purpose of the role and the main motivation should be to make a positive difference to the life chances of children.

School governors provide critical challenge and support to the leadership team of a school with the ultimate aim of driving up standards.

Acting as a school governor is a fantastic opportunity to have an impact on education and positively influence children's lives.

Get to know your community

Governors are part of the strategic leadership team of a school, and what better way to get to know your community than support an institution which lies at the heart of it?

Schools are always tied deeply within the fabric of their community and it is part of the role of being a governor to ensure the school is accountable to the area it serves.

Develop your skills

As well as giving something back to the community, school governors develop a range of both new and existing skills.

There is a wealth of training available to governors which offer opportunities for professional development. It may be that governors develop their professional expertise in a specific capacity, for example with financial professionals on a Finance Committee.

Or it could be softer skills which governors develop like team working as the governing board deliberate to come to a vital decision. Being a governor is a fantastic chance to develop your skills in a unique environment.

Improve your knowledge about the education sector

Whilst experience in education is a valuable attribute for governors to have, as a new school governor you are not expected to have a working knowledge of the education sector.

What is more important to the role is to have a relevant working skill set or experience (HR, data analysis, finance, project management) as well as a commitment to the position.

You will gain a fascinating insight into how schools work and how the education sector is changing. It may be that you want to get a better understanding of your child's education or you may have an interest in the sector more generally.

Whatever your intrigue, you're guaranteed to gain a further appreciation of the work of teachers and school leaders as well as the type of challenges schools face.

It's a challenge

There's no denying that being a school governor is a challenge, but that's a good thing. The role should be a challenge (because it's important) and it can put you out of your comfort zone when you have to get to grips with new policies, procedures and problems.

This challenge does not necessarily mean the role is time consuming – though of course it can be – but it will certainly challenge you to think in new ways and work with new people.

It may be that you are putting your professional skills to use in a new context or getting to grips with a whole new sector, but the very challenge of the role should be embraced and most governors find this very rewarding.

It's fun!

Being a school governor is fun. The positive feedback we get from governors far outweighs the occasional negative experience which can occur (as can happen with any role).

The fact that the role is so enjoyable is probably one of the main reasons why there are so many governors giving up their time to help. A great way to find out why governors enjoy the role is to chat with someone who is a governor!

Try and chat to friends or colleagues who have experience in the role – you'd be surprised how many governors you know.

Who can become a school governor

You don't have to have children at the school to be a governor. However, you do have to be over 18, and pass a formal check for your suitability to be within a school.

No specific qualifications are required but there are certain expectations.

What's really important is that you have energy, enthusiasm, time and a real desire to help provide children with the best possible education for children and young people in Sheffield.

Governors come from all sections of the community, and all walks of life.

They can be parents, staff at the school, residents in the locality or representatives of local churches or businesses. It is important that you can work as part of a team, and can give commitment to the school.

Skills and experience

Effective governors do not need to be experts in education – the main requirement needed is enthusiasm and commitment to the role. Children rely on good strong governing boards who are able to provide effective challenge and support to the school leaders.

An effective governing board needs to have a range of governors who are skilled and experienced in areas such as:

- strategic planning
- identifying problems/considering solutions
- finance and budgeting
- procurement and purchasing
- data analysis
- Health and Safety
- links with business/community
- understanding of education policy
- Time commitments

The time needed to be an active school governor can be as little as 6 to 8 hours each school month. This includes preparation time for meetings and visits.

The normal term of office for a school governor is 4 years. But governors are volunteers who can leave at any time.

They can also be re-appointed or re-elected.

The amount of time will vary depending on how much you are able and willing to give to the role. If appointed you should be prepared to:

- attend meetings - the governing board must meet at least once a term. Governing boards also have a number of committees who report back to the full governing board. You will probably be asked to serve on at least one committee
- read through papers and minutes prior to the meeting so that you are prepared for any discussions before you get to meetings - which are normally during the evening but can be during the day
- attend training to develop your skills as a governor

Training

We have always placed a great emphasis on the importance of governor training.

With this in mind, we encourage the full range of governor training and development opportunities.

Governors of schools and academies who subscribe to the service will have access to a yearly programme of courses that respond to national and local initiatives as well as having access to unlimited online governor training.

Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check

In Moorends we are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expect Governors of our Schools to share this commitment.

An appointment to a school's Governing Board is subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

Apply to become a school governor please ring School on 01405 812734.