

Help Schools Help Children

School Governor Recruitment Tool-kit



Introduction by David Miliband Minister for School Standards



“School governors are responsible for helping to provide an environment in which a good quality education can be delivered. They have an important part to play in raising school standards and shaping the futures of the young people who will form the workforce and community of tomorrow. We are grateful to this volunteer army and the tremendous commitment and support they give to the education system around the country.

However, with around 12% of school governor places vacant at any one time, a figure that may be far higher in inner city areas, it is important that these vacancies are filled to ensure that governing bodies are effective in their role. Some schools, especially those facing challenging circumstances, find it hard to recruit and retain governors. Governor vacancies reduce the effectiveness of governing bodies as the range of experience available to the school decreases, placing a greater burden on the other governors. The Department recognises that schools and LEAs need help to tackle this issue.

Our aim is to support the excellent work that schools and local education authorities already do to recruit school governors to help raise standards in schools. This “tool-kit” has been produced with help from local education authorities and aims to assist you to recruit governors who are enthusiastic and committed to improving children’s educational attainment. I hope that you will find it a useful addition to your recruitment activities.”

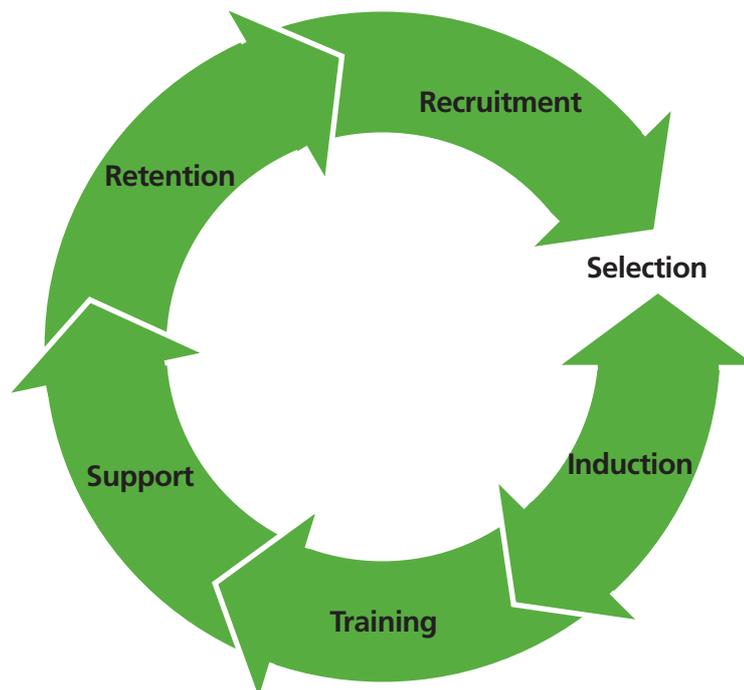
Best Practice Guide to School Governor Recruitment – Introduction

School governor recruitment can take place on four levels:

1. National activities initiated by the Department for Education and Skills (DFES)
2. LEA promotions organised by the local governor support team
3. Local promotions initiated by individual governing bodies
4. Face to face recommendations by individual governors to friends and colleagues

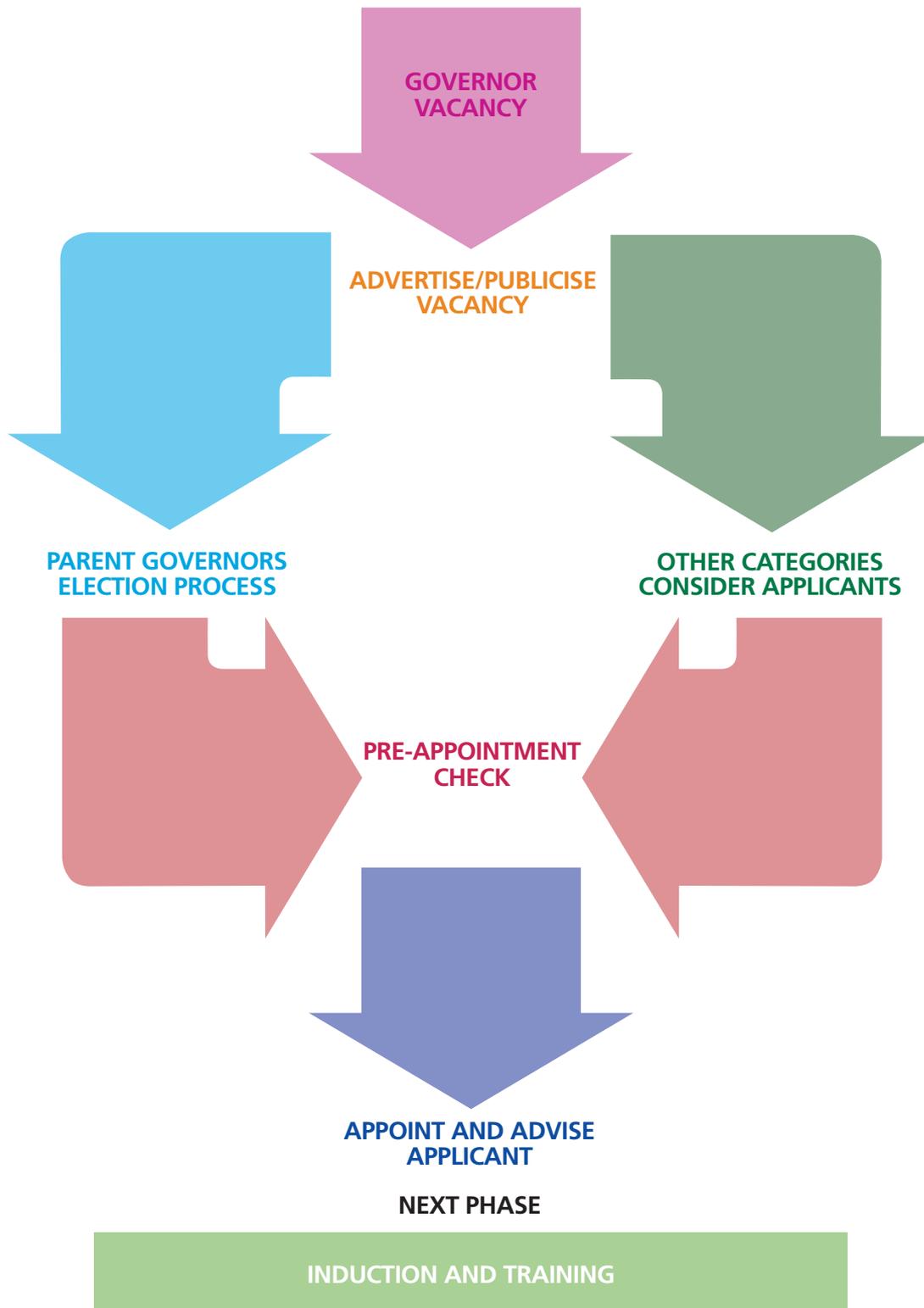
Whilst these activities are all valuable in raising awareness and generating interest, the more personal the approach, the more likely it is to succeed.

Recruitment is not an isolated activity that occurs when a vacancy exists but one of a number of related areas that contribute to governor retention and overall governing body effectiveness. This tool-kit complements the DfES governor training package and will enable school governors to be effectively recruited and trained.



Recruiting School Governors

A Flowchart





The Facts

There are approximately 350,000 governor places in England, around 1% of the adult population, forming the largest single volunteer force in the country. From 1 September 2003, this figure will increase as maintained nursery schools will be required to have governing bodies from that date.

At any one time around 12% of governor places are vacant, with some inner city areas having far higher vacancy rates.

Governor vacancies reduce the effectiveness of governing bodies because it limits the range of experience available to the school and increases the workload of other governors.

Schools serve their local community and it is therefore important that the governing body reflects that community.

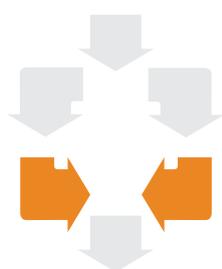
The school and its community will be better served if the governors bring the perspective of the community to their decision-making, and the community will feel connected to the school through the governing body.

Stakeholder groups, such as parents, school staff, people from the local community, the LEA and, in the case of certain schools, the foundation body, reflect those with an interest in the school.

Vacancies result in the relevant stakeholder group being under-represented and this, in turn, disturbs the balance between the groups.

Filling Your Vacancy

Once you have identified your vacant post(s) you will need to take the necessary action to attract candidates. The following pages contain ideas and suggestions to help you through the recruitment process from advertising the vacancy to appointing the successful candidate.



Advertise/Publicise Vacancy

Publicity Materials

IN YOUR RECRUITMENT MATERIALS YOU WILL NEED TO GENERATE INTEREST AND CREATE A POSITIVE IMAGE.

- Stress that decision-making is collective and that no governor has to 'go it alone'
- Mention that full induction, training and expert support is available
- Be realistic about the time commitment. Try to find an acceptable balance between letting candidates know what is required whilst not overplaying the responsibilities or time commitment
- Try not to frighten people by specifying skills and experience that you are seeking from your governors. Use of a wide range of general complementary skills is much more satisfactory
- Ensure that letters requesting parent governor nominations are friendly and highlight the importance, value and rewards of the role. Explain why parents need a voice on the governing body. A similar approach can be used for staff governors
- Do not use dry, administrative terms such as 'agenda', 'meetings' or 'reports'. Try to refer to subject matters such as 'behaviour', 'staffing' and 'curriculum'.

Responding To Enquiries

Generating enquiries from potential school governor candidates is the first part of the recruitment process. Converting this initial interest into commitment is the part that really matters. Although you will have your own individual preferences and styles when responding to enquiries you may wish to incorporate the **FAST** method, shown below.

F Friendly

A Appreciative

S Simple

T Timely

- A friendly, informal response will put the enquirer at ease and allow you to alleviate concerns that s/he may have about volunteering
- Your response should leave enquirers in no doubt about how much you appreciate and value their interest
- Try not to put people off at the initial stage with long forms. Basic details taken over the telephone should suffice. *Remember that putting someone off risks putting someone else off!*
- The speed of your response will reflect the value that you place in their enquiry and provide the right impression of the governing body. A quick telephone call of acknowledgement prepares the ground for a follow up at a convenient time
- When responding, try to put yourself in the enquirer's shoes and consider how you would wish to be treated.

If you have any ideas or suggestions that you wish to share, please complete the 'Best Practice' form on the CD-Rom and send to the DfES. Selected ideas will be publicised on the DfES School Governors' website (<http://www.governor.net.co.uk>).

Remember...

TELL IT LIKE IT IS

Give as much information as possible at the recruitment stage.

Be honest – this will avoid disillusionment and different expectations later.

BE POSITIVE!

A positive and enthusiastic approach will motivate your candidates

VALUE YOUR CANDIDATES

Your potential governors need to feel valued and important.

MATCH THEIR NEEDS

Try to place your candidates where they will be best utilised and receive the necessary opportunities.

TOTAL RETENTION IS NOT A NECESSITY

Motivations and needs change and there may be positive and negative reasons for leaving.

New recruits can bring new ideas and enthusiasm.

Changes to the size and make-up of governing bodies

Between 1 September 2003 and 31 August 2006 all governing bodies will need to choose a new size and make up that complies with a framework of guiding principles for their category of school. This new constitutional framework gives governing bodies more flexibility to choose a size and membership model that suits the school best.

Governing bodies will have until 31 August 2006 to choose a new constitutional model, which means that until that date the 'old' and 'new' arrangements and definitions for the constitution of governing bodies will exist in parallel.

The new framework for governing body constitution makes some changes to the categories of governor and definitions. For example, co-opted governors will become community governors and teacher and staff governors will merge into one category. The main changes have been indicated in the text below where relevant, but for more information please consult the guidance on governing body constitution on Governonet: www.governonet.co.uk.

Recruiting Governors

PARENT GOVERNORS

- Parent Governors are an important component in achieving an effective and well-balanced governing body
- You may introduce the subject of parent governors at an open evening or similar event for parents of new intake children. Parents may be more receptive to a direct recruitment message rather than a general written communication
- Most schools experience an ebb and flow of success in attracting new parent governors and you may wish to consider a concerted campaign using one or more of the tools contained on the CD-Rom
- You may also wish to use the Parent Governor Information Sheet on the CD-Rom as a template for your own recruitment initiative.

CO-OPTED or COMMUNITY GOVERNORS

- An effective and well-balanced governing body should comprise a range of complementary skills and experience and be representative of the community served by the school
- Co-opted or community governors are people who have an interest in local education, who understand and care about the status of schools in society and wish to make a positive contribution to education (and the community)

- Potential governors attracted in this way can be considered for either co-opted/ community or LEA-appointed governor vacancies
- Parents may also become co-opted or community governors (if there are no vacancies for parent governors at the school)
- If your school is currently having difficulty in filling co-opted/community or LEA-appointed positions you may want to consider using one or more of the tools contained on the CD-Rom.

NB Within the new constitutional framework co-opted governors are known as community governors.

GOVERNORS FROM THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

People from the business community can bring a different perspective to the governing body that is also highly beneficial. Volunteers with a range of transferable work skills, such as Financial Planning and Project Management, can add value to and strengthen governing bodies. Governors from the business community can be utilised in any appropriate category.

- Governors recruited from the business community are valued by governing bodies for the skills and experience that they bring to the role
- They can also provide objectivity in debate and decision-making and can add further and different perspectives
- We are keen to seek the support of local businesses so that they can encourage staff to consider volunteering. The main benefits are that staff can bring core skills to governing bodies and at the same time strengthen their own strategic management skills back in the workplace
- Employers who encourage their staff to become school governors complement their own staff development and community responsibility objectives
- If you wish to attract governors from the business community you may want to utilise one or more of the tools contained on the CD-Rom
- For further advice on recruiting governors from the business community you can contact The School Governors' One-Stop Shop (SGOSS), which exists to recruit school governor volunteers with transferable management skills to fill vacancies, particularly hard to fill vacancies, on inner city school governing bodies. Contact details for SGOSS can be found on page 16.

RECRUITMENT TARGETED ON COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION

- Governing bodies should be representative of the community served by the school. Where distinctive groups account for a proportion of the school intake then every effort should be made to ensure there is a representative voice on the governing body.
- This may require liaison with local community leaders who can help encourage potential volunteers to come forward whether for parent governor election or as potential co-opted/community or LEA-appointed governors.
- Recruitment literature is available in eleven languages (other than English), listed below.
 - Urdu
 - Cantonese
 - Punjabi
 - Bengali
 - Hindi
 - Gujarati
 - Vietnamese
 - Somali
 - Greek
 - Turkish
 - Arabic
- If your school is currently having difficulty in attracting potential governors from certain groups you may want to consider using one or more of the tools contained on the CD-Rom. If you have developed successful strategies for reaching out to groups not previously represented on your governing body, let us know using the 'Best Practice' sheet on the CD-Rom.
- For further advice on recruiting governors from under-represented groups please contact the School Government Team 2 at the Department for Education and Skills. Contact details can be found on page 16.



Election Process

RESPONSIBILITY FOR ELECTIONS

Community, Voluntary Controlled and Maintained nursery schools – The LEA is responsible for all parent governor elections. They can delegate this function to the head teacher.

Foundation and Voluntary aided schools – The governing body is responsible for organising parent governor elections.

ELECTION CRITERIA

All parents of registered pupils at the school must be informed of:

- any parent governor vacancy
- the need for an election
- their right to stand for election
- their right to vote for the candidate of their choice.

If the election is contested it must be held by ballot. Parent governor ballots may be either by post or by 'pupil post'. If the number of parents standing for election is equal to or less than the number of places available, a ballot is not necessary.

In some circumstances a child may have more than two 'parents' who have the right to stand as governors, or to vote. The school's admissions register will include a list of parents of pupils at the school.



Consider Applicants

Local education authority (LEA) governors LEAs support schools by appointing, as Local Education Authority governors, those who are best qualified to help schools to improve. In making appointments to particular schools, LEAs should have regard to the skills and experience of which those schools have the greatest need, and to candidates' support for the schools' ethos and mission. It is good practice to advertise for candidates, highlighting the skills and experience required. LEAs should, in any case, publish the process and criteria by which they identify candidates for appointment. LEAs should ensure appointments are promptly made, normally within 3 months, when vacancies arise, and should not allow vacancies to remain because suitable political appointees are not available. LEAs must appoint the appropriate number of governors to each governing body. There can be no justification for retaining vacancies.

Co-opted or community governors are appointed by members of the governing body. All categories of school, except voluntary aided schools, will have co-opted or community governors. Within the new constitutional framework co-opted governors are known as community governors and, once a governing body has reconstituted, can be appointed by the governing body as a whole (not just by those members who were not themselves co-opted)

Staff paid to work at the school, registered pupils at the school and elected members of the local education authority cannot be appointed as co-opted or community governors. However, employees of the local education authority *may* be co-opted. In appointing co-opted or community governors it is important to try and ensure that the governing body is representative of the local community, including the business community.

The categories of teacher governors and staff governors are merged into one category of staff governors in the new constitutional framework.

Partnership governors will exist only at foundation and foundation special schools that do not have a foundation or trustees. Partnership governors must be members of the community served by the school who are committed to the good government and success of the school. The governing body will be responsible for seeking nominations for and appointing partnership governors. This includes seeking nominations from parents of pupils at the school and such other persons in the community served by the school as they consider appropriate. Governing bodies may decide for themselves how they will seek

nominations, but they must make sure that parents of pupils at the school are informed that they may make nominations. Some people may not be appointed as partnership governors. These are registered pupils at the school and their parents, people paid to work at the school, elected members of the LEA and, within the new framework, employees of the LEA employed in connection with its education functions.

Additional co-opted governors. Additional co-opted governors are governors who may be co-opted by a governing body of a primary voluntary or community school after nomination by bodies such as local or parish councils served by the school.

NB Additional co-opted governors are no longer represented as a separate category of governor once the governing body has reconstituted.

Sponsor governors. Within the new framework people who give substantial assistance to the school, financially or in kind, or who provide services to the school can be appointed as sponsor governors by a governing body. This allows for external partners, including other schools, who offer advice and support to a school to be represented on the governing body. These can include governors nominated by the local Education Action Forum if the school is part of an Education Action Zone (EAZ). A governing body can appoint a maximum of two sponsor governors.

Associate members. Governing bodies can benefit from being able to draw on expertise and experience from outside their formal governor membership. The governing body can appoint associate members to serve on one or more governing body committees and attend full governing body meetings. Associate members are persons interested in contributing to the work of the governing body, but who are, for whatever reasons, not able or reluctant to become governors. The definition of associate member is wide and can include pupils, school staff and persons who want to contribute specifically on issues related to their particular area of expertise, for instance finance.



Appoint your new Governor

Once you have appointed or elected your successful candidate(s), you may wish to do some of the following for your new governor:

The chair can

- offer an informal introductory telephone call or meeting (interview) expressing thanks and giving a brief background to the main issues being discussed by the governing body;
- allocate an experienced governor to 'mentor' the newcomer;
- introduce them to the members of the governing body;
- make sure they feel welcome, valued and involved early on in their term of office.

The head may

- have a brief chat and give a tour of the school;

The clerk may

- advise the dates, venues and timings of meetings and outline the type of documentation each meeting will require;
- work, in conjunction with the LEA, to provide good initial training and induction;

Fellow governors

- Help them to understand their role within the governing body.

Best Practice

Sharing Good Practice Scheme

The GovernorNet website offers schools and LEAs the opportunity to submit and share their recruitment ideas and initiatives with others in similar positions. If you have any stories concerning a particular recruitment activity that has worked well for you please use the form on the CD-Rom or the website so that other governing bodies and LEAs can consider whether it may be of help to them.

* The Department wishes to acknowledge the contribution of Essex, Portsmouth and Swindon Local Education Authorities in the production of this toolkit. Some of the material is taken, by kind permission, from the Swindon Borough Council Guide to School Governor Recruitment and Retention.

Contact details

Department for Education and Skills (DfES)

SCHOOL GOVERNOR RECRUITMENT

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Staindrop Road
Darlington
DL3 9BG
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www.governornet.co.uk

SCHOOL GOVERNORS' ONE-STOP SHOP (SGOSS)

64 Essex Road
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Tel: 0870 241 3883 or 020 7288 1720
E-mail: info@schoolgovernors-oss.co.uk
www.schoolgovernors-oss.co.uk

NATIONAL GOVERNORS COUNCIL (NGC)

Lonsdale House
52 Blucher Street
Birmingham
B1 1QU
Tel: 0121 616 5104
E-mail: ngc@ngc.org.uk
www.ngc.org.uk

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNORS AND MANAGERS (NAGM)

Suite 1, 4th Floor
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Smallbrook Queensway
Birmingham B5 4HQ
Tel: 0121 643 5787
E-mail: governorhq@nagm.org.uk
www.nagm.org.uk

INFORMATION FOR SCHOOL AND COLLEGE GOVERNORS (ISCG)

ISCG at Avondale School
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www.governors.fsnet.co.uk



www.governor.net.co.uk

Further copies of this booklet may be obtained from:

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE