

## WHEN TO GET IN CONTACT WITH US

Whilst this is not an exhaustive list, we've set out below a brief checklist of some of the key times when Foundation Governors should get in touch with us.

- ◇ **If a vacancy for a Headteacher occurs at the school** – so we can assist the Governing Body with advice about the new appointment. We would usually be involved in the preliminary meeting to advise on the job description/advert/timetable; attend the shortlisting meeting to input into shortlisting process; be involved in the planning of the interview process; and attend the interview itself.
- ◇ **If there are plans to alter or extend school buildings** – so we can provide support, and help you to ensure that any necessary trustee consents are in place.
- ◇ **If changes are being proposed to your admissions policy** – so we can provide the necessary guidance as the “diocesan authority.”
- ◇ **If a change is proposed to the composition of the Governing Body** – so we can provide advice and guidance. We will also need to approve any changes to the school's Instrument of Government.
- ◇ **If you are considering entering into structural arrangements with other schools and/or converting to an academy** – so we can ensure that you have obtained our guidance and any necessary DBE/related consents.
- ◇ **If a Foundation Governor resigns and we have not been notified** – so we can make sure this is picked up and we can seek recommendations for a replacement.
- ◇ **If you have serious concerns about aspects of the school or its governance which you need to share.**

**Thank you, and keep in touch!**



York Diocesan Board of Education

## FOUNDATION GOVERNORS

In a Church of England Voluntary Aided school



Stained glass window at Riston CE VC Primary School

**A brief guide to your role**

August 2017

## Training and events

*New to being a Foundation Governor? Or in need of a refresher?*

Come along to a **\*FREE\* Effective Governance in a Church of England School training session**. These sessions explore the distinctive nature of Church of England schools and the special responsibilities of Church of England school Governors. We introduce you to the Anglican school inspection framework (SIAMS) and show how Governors can contribute to effective self-evaluation of Church of England schools.

For those who are ready to learn more, our **\*FREE\* SIAMS briefings** will guide Governors through the SIAMS framework and inspection process, focusing on the SIAMS schedule and unpacking the core questions and grade descriptors to help you to plan for inspection.

These sessions are essential for Foundation Governors, but something we'd encourage all Church of England school Governors to attend!

You can find details of all our training and events on our website – see <http://dioceseofyork.org.uk/supporting-schools/events/>.

### **Our weekly education email**

The main way we keep in regular contact with our Foundation Governors is through our weekly education emails. We'd encourage all Governors to sign up to receive this email if they don't do so already. Please contact Anita Ranyell ([admin@yorkdiocese.org](mailto:admin@yorkdiocese.org)).

### **Service Level Agreement**

The Diocese offers its schools the opportunity to sign up to a service level agreement. Many of the services offered under the Service Level Agreement are aimed at helping the school to develop its Church of England ethos. A copy of the current Service Level Agreement can be found here: <http://dioceseofyork.org.uk/supporting-schools/what-we-do/sla-201719/>. We would advise Foundation Governors to find out if their school is part of the SLA and to explore what support they might receive under it.

## THE DIOCESE ARE HERE TO HELP!



### The Education Team

Don't forget that we are here to support you.

We have a team who can provide support in a number of areas including:

- Church school distinctiveness
- RE and Collective Worship
- School effectiveness
- Church school governance and collaborative structures
- Appointment and appraisal of headteachers
- School buildings

Further details, and team contact details can be found on our website (<http://dioceseofyork.org.uk/supporting-schools/whos-who/>).

If you're unsure who to get in touch with, the best person to contact in the first instance is Anita Ranyell ([admin@yorkdiocese.org](mailto:admin@yorkdiocese.org), 01904 699511).

## Join the Family!

Welcome to the family of Church of England Foundation Governors, spread across more than 4,700 Church of England schools in England and 127 Church of England schools in the Diocese of York. We hope that you'll find the role of a Foundation Governor rewarding.

This booklet is intended to give an introduction to the role, and to signpost you to where you might find further help and support as you develop as a Foundation Governor.



### Why are we here?

*Working together to:*

- nurture disciples in our schools
- deepen commitment through participation in daily acts of worship and engagement in religious education
- promote partnerships with and in the communities we serve
- enhance our ability to be salt and light to the whole world and help more people to encounter the living Christ.



### The Right Reverend Paul Ferguson

Chair of the York Diocesan Board of Education

*"Thank you for being a governor of a Church of England school, or thinking whether this role might be for you.*

*Governors have a vital role in holding some essential parts of our mission together: providing a first-class experience for the children in our schools, maintaining contact with parents, supporting head teachers and staff, ensuring that the assets we have for education are used wisely, and seeing all this as part of our shared vision in the Diocese of York to grow in Christlikeness, commitment, partnership, influence and numbers. As a school governor myself, I hope that you would find this role as fulfilling as I have."*

## BEING A FOUNDATION GOVERNOR – WHAT’S REQUIRED?

The key function of Foundation Governors is to “explore, with their partners on the Governing Body, ways in which the Church’s role in the school may be more fully and positively implemented.”

(National Society, 1996)

### *The “traditional role” of the Foundation Governor*

**Foundation Governors have a special role in, and responsibility for, ensuring that the Christian character of the school is secured, preserved and developed and that the school is run in accordance with any trust deed relating to the school.**

Foundation Governors are representatives of the Church of England on the Governing Body. They should endeavor to cultivate respect for the spiritual and moral beliefs of the Christian tradition, and to create a community in which pupils, cared for as individuals, are helped to find fulfilment as they grow towards adulthood. As an active Christian presence within the school, they are a vital link between parish and school, playing a unique role in strengthening and enriching the dynamic relationship between school, Church and the wider community.

Foundation Governors have certain specific roles and responsibilities which will depend on the type of school in which they operate, but they will all need to work with the PCC and local parish church, the Incumbent and other members of the school’s Governing Body in upholding the school’s ethos statement and making sure that the school is distinctively Christian.

### *Ethos statement for Church of England Schools*

*“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 within 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.”*

As well as receiving an Ofsted inspection, Church of England schools are inspected additionally under the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) framework. In a Voluntary Aided school the inspection will cover Christian Character, Collective Worship, RE and leadership of the school as a Church school.

A Voluntary Aided school is in a different situation to most schools that are maintained by the Local Authority in some other ways. For example:

- ◆ Staff in a Voluntary Aided school are employed by the Governing Body (funded from the delegated budget), rather than being employed by the Local Authority. Christian commitment may be taken into account in making appointments in appropriate circumstances.
- ◆ The Governing Body in a Voluntary Aided school is the Admissions Authority, and has the responsibility for setting its own admissions policy. Faith based over-subscription criteria are permitted. (In most maintained schools, the Local Authority is the Admissions Authority.) The Governing Body must consider the DBE’s guidance in determining the admissions policy and must consult the Diocese prior to making any changes to the existing policy.
- ◆ The Governing Body in a Voluntary Aided school is required to fund 10% of all capital works. This requirement does not apply to most maintained schools.
- ◆ Voluntary Aided schools follow a denominational RE syllabus. In practice, Voluntary Aided schools use the syllabus recommended by their Diocese. (Most maintained schools must offer RE in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus.)

### *Keeping in touch with the PCC*

Foundation Governors should report to the PCC and congregation about the work of the school, encouraging parishioners to support it prayerfully and financially.

## WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW?

### *Growing as a Governor*

There is a lot that you will need to know as a Governor. You won't know everything straight away and you will grow in knowledge and confidence over time. We'd encourage you to take as much advantage as possible of the training opportunities available to you, including those within the Diocese and those provided by third parties. A number of Local Authorities put on full training programmes for new Governors which Governors are strongly urged to take advantage of.

And of course, there's no substitute for getting stuck in and getting to know your school!

### *Getting to grips with a Church of England school*

Church of England schools, whatever their status, differ from most other maintained schools in a number of ways. For example:

- ◆ The Instrument of Government of a Church of England school will contain a faith based ethos statement, and provide for the appointment of Foundation Governors.
- ◆ The site and buildings of a Church of England school are usually owned by site trustees, except for the playing fields. The trustees (who might, for example, be the York Diocesan Board of Finance, or the vicar and churchwardens) hold the land for the specific purposes specified in their trust deed and have a responsibility to ensure that the activities on the site comply with the requirements of the trust deed. Playing fields and any structures thereon are usually owned by the Local Authority.
- ◆ Church of England schools must provide a daily act of Collective Worship. That daily act must be in accordance with the school's trust deed/the Anglican tradition.
- ◆ A high importance should be given to the study of Religious Education, with RE being a core subject within the school.

A Foundation Governor will need to be able to understand and articulate the role of the Church in the school, and the importance of the school's distinctively Christian character; foster and grow those key relationships between and within the Church and the school; encourage and focus debate in key areas (including Christian vision and values, Collective Worship and Religious Education); and secure that school thrives as a Church of England school.

### *The statutory role of a Governor*

At the same time, Foundation Governors have a responsibility to their school, their pupils and their communities to support their school to be effective in terms of achieving and exceeding the standards expected by government. Foundation Governors, who will take on the full responsibilities of being a school Governor, will need to have the skills and otherwise be in a position to contribute appropriately to the Governing Body and the effective governance of the school.

The Government provides detailed guidance on the role of a Governor in its "Governor's Handbook" (the latest version of which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governors-handbook--3>). The Handbook identifies the following three core strategic functions of Governing Bodies:

- ⇒ Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- ⇒ Holding the executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance management of staff;
- ⇒ Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.

### *A question of "fit"*

And of course Foundation Governors need to be able to work well with the particular school and the Governing Body to which they are being appointed. We ask those thinking about becoming a Foundation Governor to speak to the Chair of Governors/headteacher, the Incumbent and (if the Incumbent does not serve on the school's Governing Body) a serving Foundation Governor about the role before taking it on. This is both so that the individual can understand more about what's required and questions of "fit" can be properly considered.

## WHAT MAKES A CHURCH SCHOOL DISTINCTIVE AND DIFFERENT?

Whilst every school is distinctive and different in some ways, the question of distinctiveness is frequently asked with reference to Church schools. Church schools should be distinctive in their Collective Worship and Religious Education offering, their ethos, and the ways in which their distinctively Christian values are worked into the daily life of the school. Some of the ways in which this might be seen might include:

- ◇ A core Christian vision with Christian values embedded across the school;
- ◇ A place of distinctive excellence, where all are valued as individuals and as God's children;
- ◇ A safe place where there is no ideological pressure and yet Christian inferences are built into the ethos and the teaching;
- ◇ Understanding of, and sensitivity towards, those of other faiths and those of no faith;
- ◇ Effective links with the local Church, Diocese and local community;
- ◇ A deliberate attempt to link the concerns of Christ's Gospel with the life of the school;
- ◇ Visible signs and symbols of its Christian foundation around the school;
- ◇ An inclusive place where selfless care and Christian love is apparent to all;
- ◇ A place where learning and the acquiring of skills are seen as a part of the revelation of God and His continuous involvement in His creation;
- ◇ Distinctively Anglican Collective Worship that develops a true sense of awe and wonder, follows the liturgical year, and celebrates with the parish significant Christian festivals and feast days;
- ◇ High quality Religious Education that is seen as an important part of the curriculum and a core subject;
- ◇ A commitment to developing the spiritual dimension both in the formal and the hidden curriculum;
- ◇ A place that takes the views of all the members of its community seriously and where the voice of the weakest is heard.

***A good school is both reflective and evaluative, willing to challenge itself with the help of critical friends such as Governors. An effective Church school extends these processes to include the development of the spiritual dimension. Foundation Governors have a particular role to play in this aspect of the school's management and governance.***

## WHO ELSE WILL BE THERE WITH ME?

### *How many other Foundation Governors will there be?*

In Voluntary Aided schools, Foundation Governors will be in the majority on the Governing Body. The school's Instrument of Government, which sets out the composition of the Governing Body, will provide that Foundation Governors must outnumber all other Governors by two.

### *How will they be appointed?*

A school's Instrument of Government will provide for the Incumbent to be a Foundation Governor ex officio, unless the individual fulfilling that role is unwilling or unable to fulfil the role of Governor. Incumbents are encouraged to reflect critically on the way they are best able to support the school - this may involve becoming a Foundation Governor however this will not necessarily be the case in every instance. In cases where the ex officio role is not taken up by the Incumbent, a temporary replacement will be appointed by the Archdeacon.

Other Foundation Governors will usually be appointed by the Diocesan Board of Education, following consultation with the local PCC.