

School Governors are people like you



Bracknell Forest Governor

Being a school governor in Bracknell Forest

The fact that you are reading this leaflet means that you are probably interested in education and that you may have wondered what a school governor is and how to become one.

The questions and answers in this leaflet are those that are often asked by prospective governors, and we hope that they serve to provide a realistic picture of what it means to be a school governor in a Bracknell Forest school.

What is a school governor?

Every maintained school has a governing body usually made up of between 7 and 20 school governors who oversee the running of the school and provide the strategic direction for the school's future.

Governors work closely with the Headteacher who is responsible for the day to day management of the school and staff.

Governors come from all walks of life and may be from the community that the school serves, parents of children at the school, school staff and also from the business community. Some governors are appointed by the Local Authority (LA) and in Church schools by the relevant Diocesan authority.

Why do people become governors?

Governing bodies rely on a variety of experiences and perspectives. One of the most common reasons people give is that they want to give back something to their community. Being a school governor is an important and worthwhile volunteer role. You do not have to be a parent to become a school governor.

Do I need any qualifications?

No formal qualifications are required. However, governors' skills and expertise contribute to the effectiveness of the governing body. Financial skills are always in demand, and business and management skills or a background in education are also beneficial to governing bodies. Most people have some skills to offer and a commitment to the education and future of young people is essential.

Are there any age restrictions?

The only age restriction is that you must be over 18 to be a school governor. Most governing bodies benefit from having a wide range of age groups.

How much time does it take?

Most of the business of governing a school takes place in meetings and it is really important that you attend them unless you have good reason not to, in which case you should send apologies. Most schools have between three and six full governing body meetings a year. In addition you will often be asked to sit on a committee which will also meet once or twice a term. Meetings often take place in the evening and usually last for about two hours. Some schools hold meetings during the day or after school in late afternoon.

However there is more to being a governor than just attending meetings. Governors will also want to visit the school during the school day in a supportive role to see the school in action. All visits however should be discussed with the Headteacher in advance.

In addition you will need to spend some time reading documents and attending training sessions.

Can I get time off work to be a governor?

Employers must give employees who are school governors reasonable time off work to carry out their duties, This may be unpaid. This is something that the employer and employee need to negotiate and you are advised to contact your HR department to find out what your employer's policy is.

Employers can in turn benefit, as an employee who is a school governor will have access to training and development in addition to any training through work. You will be learning new skills and building on your self confidence in another role.

A lot has changed since I was at school, how will I know what to do?

Understandably, new governors may be anxious about their new role. When you are appointed, you will be sent an induction pack from Bracknell Forest Council, which has a dedicated Governor Services section which is there to provide support and answer any queries that you may have. There is also a governors' helpline: 01344 354066, and many other sources of support and information.

New governors are expected to attend an introductory training course. The Council offers a comprehensive range of training opportunities. You will also receive help and information from the clerk to your governing body and from other governors. The clerk will provide you with copies of previous minutes of meetings, information relating to the procedures and regulations that apply to governing bodies, and other information which relates specifically to your school.

How much will the training cost?

The training and support materials provided by Bracknell Forest Council are free of charge to individual governors.

How long is an appointment for?

Most governors are appointed to serve for four years. However, you can resign at any time. After four years you may be eligible, if you wish, to serve for a further term.

Do I have to be elected?

Parent and staff governors are elected to their positions and others are appointed either by the Local Authority, the Diocesan authority (in Church schools), or by the governing body. This will depend on what type of vacancy you will be filling.

Can I choose at which school to be a governor?

You can state a preference for specific schools or areas if you wish and you will not be made to be a governor at any school unless you want to be. Appointments can only be made where there are vacancies, but once you are registered with us we will take your preferences into account.

If you are a parent of a child in school, you will have the opportunity to apply for any parent governor vacancies that arise in that school.

Do I need a security check?

You do have to sign a declaration to confirm that you qualify to be a school governor and to provide evidence of identification. You may also be asked to undergo a check by the Disclosure & Barring Service.

How do I find out more?

Contact Governor Services at Bracknell Forest Council, who will answer any other queries you may have and send you a form to fill in. With your permission they will forward your details to individual schools.

Governors' helpdesk 01344 354066/4071
governors.helpdesk@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Alternatively, you may choose to contact individual schools yourself. Enquiries should be made to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors.

www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/schoolgovernors