

Guidance for Ex-Officio foundation Governors

Foundation Governors

- All Church schools have Foundation Governors. These are normally appointed by either the Diocesan Board of Education or the local PCC or a mix of both. Normally under the instrument of government, one foundation governor is the **ex-officio governor**. The parish priest would normally assume this role unless there are particular reasons against. Sometimes where there is a federation of more than one school there may be more than one ex-officio or an arrangement where the ex-officio role rotates. The instrument of government will set out what should happen in circumstances where the parish priest is unable, unwilling or prevented from acting in that role. This usually involves the Archdeacon appointing a temporary ex-officio foundation governor in consultation with the Diocesan Board of Education.

Categories of Church School

- In a Voluntary Aided school, the foundation governors have to outnumber all other governors by a majority of two. In a Voluntary Controlled School, the foundation governors are in a minority and cannot form more than 25% of the governing body. In academies the overriding board of governors are often also called directors or trustees and whilst there may not be a formal ex-officio role at this level it is likely that the parish priest will have a place on the local governing committee (sometimes called an academy council) for the school along with others nominated by the Diocesan Board of Education and PCC.

The distinctive role of ex-officio foundation governors

- As with all governors, foundation governors are responsible for strategic oversight of the school including ensuring best use of public funds, holding the Head Teacher to account for educational standards and ensuring clarity of vision and ethos. In particular foundation governors should also ensure that the school is run in line with its historic trusts as a Church school and ensuring that religious education and worship take place. These responsibilities are especially monitored through Section 48 SIAMs inspections (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools).
- By virtue of being the parish priest, the ex-officio governor has a key role in the following areas (note that for some of these areas the parish priest will need support and involvement from other members of the parish community): -
 - Developing the framework within which the school and church will work together in the community as a whole, not just on the governing body. They will be responsible for developing the parish's relationship with its school, and helping both groups towards a fuller understanding of how church and school can form a powerful Christian partnership.

- As priest, leading acts of worship for the school, both in church and in school forms the basis for the vital relationship between school and church and is an expression of the parish commitment to the school.
 - As a 'lead' foundation governor, they work with other foundation governors monitoring and supporting the school's distinctive Christian ethos ensuring it fulfils the expectations of its Christian foundation including in relation to SIAMs.
 - Opening each meeting of the Governing Body with prayer, this sets the tone for the meeting and reminds of the Christian ethos of the school as a whole
 - Endeavouring to build a positive relationship with the Head Teacher. This is vital to the school's development as a Christian community and supporting the Head Teacher in leading a Church of England school
 - Through their pastoral role supporting governors and staff.
- The ex-officio role is time consuming but vital; as stated in the Dearing Review the school should be at the centre of the Church's mission. Individual circumstances will dictate how much time can be given to school ministry and this will be for each priest to discern based on their own wisdom and context. Please consider the following:-
 - Please think very carefully about whether taking on a role as Chair of Governors is possible and appropriate in your particular context as it can be very time consuming and can also potentially be viewed as a conflict with the role of pastoral support in some circumstances.
 - Please also think carefully about whether you have the time and capacity to sit on more than one governing body. It is acknowledged this can be challenging where you have more than one school (both church and community) within your benefice. It is important that ex-officio places on Church school governing bodies are filled by an Archdeacon's appointment, so as not to leave a school unsupported and it may be possible for clergy on ministry teams to share ex-officio duties where possible.
 - Governors' meetings and committees, could amount to at least one hour per week in term time. To be a full and effective governor the ex-officio needs to commit to committees.
 - There are areas where the ex-officio governor would be expected to be involved as a result of the pastoral side of their role:
 - As a member of any Appeals or Grievance panel, where pastoral support will be a strength.
 - Staff appointments, the appointment of a new Headteacher will be a time of particular importance for the future of the school and the links between school and parish.
 - Areas where pastoral support is unexpectedly required in school e.g. bereavement; personal crisis; controversy; accident; celebration.
 - Many ex-officio governors may see their particular strength in the chaplaincy role in school, rather than the technical role of governor, but this should not be thought of as

an exclusive decision and some ideas as to how to ensure the role can encompass both are below:-

- Consider planning a clear pattern of visits, perhaps based around times of leading collective worship, this could also include a chat with staff/ the Head and classroom visits so this is both pastoral and monitoring from a governance perspective
- Ensuring that the Head Teacher and fellow governors understand the importance of the priest's pastoral role as part of the parish commitment to the school
- Encouraging fellow foundation governors to also visit and involve themselves with the school
- Engaging other members of the ministry team, and of other denominations, with school whilst retaining the unique identity of the parish and the school

All Schools

All schools within a parish will form part of the parochial ministry. As well as relationships with Church schools, there will be excellent relationships and work in community schools.

Growing Faith

- As ex officio, there is a need to acknowledge and utilise the support of the Parish Community. This is made clear by the 'Growing Faith' Vision set by the House of Bishops:-
 - Growing Faith calls for a culture shift which will take time to be embedded. The vision is for every aspect of mission and ministry to be viewed through the lens of its implications for children, young people and households. It is a vision where children, young people and households are coming to faith, growing in discipleship and confidently contributing to the Kingdom of God through the community of faith. It is anticipated that Growing Faith will work with and alongside Setting God's People Free, particularly in seeking to see the people of God confidently living out their faith in homes and schools.
 - The partnership between churches, schools and households is crucial in this. It should be evident in the structures of each diocese, and form a central strand of every parish, deanery or diocesan mission action plan, reflecting the unique makeup of each diocese, and the particularities of each parish and deanery. Therefore, although the underlying principles of Growing Faith remain the same, the outworking will look different within each diocese.

December 2021