

Business and school governance

What are the personal benefits to be gained from being a school governor?

The main benefit gained from being a school governor is a sense of satisfaction through involvement in the most important volunteering role in education. The collective decisions made, as a member of the governing body, will help shape the future of children at school.

Other benefits will include:

- The opportunity to develop new skills and to strengthen existing ones.
- The opportunity to practice work talents. As part of a team, being a school governor gives the opportunity to work with a wide range of people from a variety of social, cultural and religious backgrounds.
- The opportunity to gain an understanding of the decision making process of school governing bodies and an awareness of the education system as a whole.
- The opportunity to make a real difference and the chance to contribute to the good of the community, leading to personal satisfaction and a sense of achievement.
- The opportunity to undertake training provided by the Local Authority on various aspects of the governor

What are the responsibilities of a school governor?

Governors are responsible for promoting high standards of educational achievement and enabling the head teacher and the staff to deliver these. Governors are involved in planning the school's long-term future, in overseeing its aims, values and ethos, and in monitoring its performance.

How much work does being a governor involve?

Time spent on governor duties varies by school. Governing bodies generally meet at least once per school term and are supported by committees that discuss key areas such as finance and personnel. It is important that governors are able to attend the majority of full governing body meetings; some reading will also be necessary as preparation for these meetings. Participation in one of the committees is by invitation of the governing body and is a matter of individual preference.

Although it is difficult to quantify the time commitment involved, it is likely to average out at 6-8 hours per calendar month. Most meetings take place on weekday evenings. Some employers have a policy that makes allowances for the time you spend as a governor.

How big a commitment is this?

The normal term for serving as a governor is four years. An effective governor will want to provide stability and continuity to a school's governing body and will ideally be able to commit to this period of time. As volunteers governors can choose to leave the governing body at any time.

What qualities or qualifications do governors need?

There are no special qualifications needed to be a school governor. The most important qualities a governor will bring to a governing body are enthusiasm and commitment. Governors are likely to be working with people from a variety of social, religious, and cultural backgrounds so it will also help to be a good listener, taking time to understand the views of different people. Governor bring a range of skills, experience, interests and perspectives from many walks of life. This will aid the decision-making functions of the governing body.

Should I encourage my staff to be governors?

School governance has many parallels with running a business, and getting involved makes good commercial sense as well as providing an excellent opportunity for companies seeking to get involved in the community. By supporting staff in their role as governors an employer has the opportunity to gain significant benefits. These range from an enhanced company profile, to staff development, to shaping the local workforce.

Key business benefits from community involvement

- Employee development
- Strong and positive links with the community
- A more informed workforce
- Projecting company / business values
- Better customer relations / PR
- Opportunity to shape future workforce
- Staff recruitment
- Demonstrate company skill

Why people with work and management skills?

Schools are becoming more autonomous; some larger schools deal with budgets in excess of £4 million and have more than 100 members of staff. Therefore they need access to expertise in finance and personnel. People from the world of work bring a different perspective to the governing body that is also very beneficial.

Skills learnt in the workplace can add real value to school governing bodies. Volunteers with an external, work-based perspective who are willing to challenge assumptions and promote innovation will be increasingly important as schools deal with major issues such as the expansion of knowledge and resource; the pace and type of change; the implication of faith, race and language; and the influence of new technology.

People have a range of transferable work skills that can add value to schools and strengthen governing bodies e.g.

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| • Marketing | • Strategic planning |
| • Financial planning | • Personnel |
| • Project management | • Decision making |
| • ICT | • Problem solving |
| • Communications | • Team working |