



Appointment of Elected Parent Governors

Where there is a vacancy for a position of an Elected Parent Governor the law requires the governing body to:

- Take all reasonable steps to fill the vacancy as soon as is reasonably practical
- inform all parents of registered pupils at the school of the vacancy, that they are entitled to stand for election and be given the opportunity to do so.
- determine qualifying dates (e.g. final date for nominations, ballot papers to be returned, etc.)
- provide an opportunity for postal voting.
- hold the election by secret ballot

The governing body may not impose any requirements as to the minimum number of votes to be cast for any candidate.

Guidance for Governing Bodies

Delegation. The governing body may delegate aspects of the conduct of the election of parent governors to the Head teacher, or other responsible members of staff. If so, the exact terms of the delegation should be made clear. Overall responsibility, however, remains with the governing body.

Timing of elections. There is no provision for holding an election in advance of the occurrence of a vacancy. Where the term of office of an elected parent governor falls at the end of a school year, the election should be held in the autumn term, preferably before the first full meeting of the governing body. At other times, the election should be held as quickly as possible, but if the vacancy falls in the second half of the summer term, consideration should be given to holding the election over until the new school year to allow for the participation of new parents. Sufficient time should be allowed for information to circulate and ballot papers to be returned. The aim should be to complete the exercise within a month, allowing at least seven school days for receiving nominations and ten school days for the return of ballot papers.

Eligibility of parents. Any person who is the parent of a registered pupil at the school has the right to be advised of the vacancy for parent governor, invited to stand for election and the right to vote. This need not be a person with whom the pupil normally resides. Whilst there is no obligation on the school to search exhaustively for every person who might be eligible, the governing body cannot rule ineligible any person known to be a parent.

A person is **disqualified from being a parent governor** if they are an elected member of the LA or paid to work at the school for more than 500 hours (i.e. for more than one-third of the hours of a full-time equivalent) in any consecutive twelve month period (at the time of election or appointment).

Pre-election publicity. All reasonable steps should be taken, including a letter by 'pupil post', in the 'Friday newsletter' and a notice on the school website, to advertise the election and invite nominations. Once nominations have been received, it is good practice to give election candidates an opportunity to circulate a mini 'curriculum vitae and manifesto' if they wish to do so. There is no requirement to do this, but the same opportunity must be offered to every candidate. To accord with the 2012 Governance Regulations appointments candidates should have the necessary skills and experience to enable them to effectively support the school. The school therefore should publish any expectations of what might be considered to be helpful skills and experience in their pre-election publicity so that the 'electorate' (ie the parent body) can take this into account before casting their votes.



Elected parent governors **cannot be removed** from office – even if it becomes apparent that they are unable to develop the skills to contribute to effective governance or behave in a manner befitting the role. Every effort should therefore be made upfront to avoid potential difficulties later by informing prospective candidates of the nature of the role –include a reference to the expectations, conduct and participation of a governor. (See *'Factsheet for those interested in becoming a governor in a Catholic School'* and the available within the Governor Information section of the NRCDES website)

Nominations. The governing body must decide how nominations are to be presented. It is usual, but not mandatory, to require nominees to secure a proposer and seconder. Some require additional 'sponsors' to ensure that the candidate has a measure of support. Where participation has been low in the past, self-nomination may be acceptable. In any event, the governing body should secure written confirmation that the nominee is a firm candidate. Where the number of nominees is equal to or less than the number of vacancies, voting is not required.

Failure to fill the vacancy. If the number of parents standing for election is less than the number of vacancies, the remaining vacancies must be made up by parents 'appointed' by the governing body. Ideally, any parent so appointed should be the parent of a registered pupil at the school. Where this is not possible the person appointed should be the parent of a child of school age, but may not be an elected member of the local education authority, an employee of the local education authority or the employee of the governing body of any school maintained by the local education authority. Where a governing body does 'appoint' a parent governor the clerk should ensure that this is clearly recorded as under the Governance Regulations the procedures for removal from office are different in relation to 'appointed' as opposed to 'elected' parents.

Governing bodies may only appoint as a parent governor a parent who has, in their opinion, the skills to contribute to effective governance and the success of the school.

Conduct of the Election

The governing body should appoint a returning officer who may be the Head teacher, the clerk to the governing body or the chair of governors.

The electoral method is usually 'first past the post'. Proportional representation is acceptable, but not recommended unless the governing body is confidently able to manage the complexities.

The governing body must decide whether each parent receives one ballot paper, or one ballot paper per child. The former is recommended as being fairer albeit more difficult to administer, unless the school maintains (as many now do) a data base of parents and those with parental responsibility. Each parent must receive at least one ballot paper. The ballot paper should list the candidates, preferably in alphabetical order.

Since the ballot must be secret, there can be no requirement for parents to sign the ballot paper.

The law requires governing bodies to provide the facility of voting by post. The governing body may also wish to permit voting by proxy, although the difficulties of administering this may outweigh the advantages.

The returning officer should be responsible for the count. It should take place at a time and place to be determined by the governing body. Candidates should be allowed to attend the count if they wish. In any event, the count should be witnessed by at least one other responsible person, who may be able to share the responsibility of deciding the validity of dubious ballot papers.

The outcome of the election should be notified to parents, the Head teacher, governors and the clerk to the governing body.