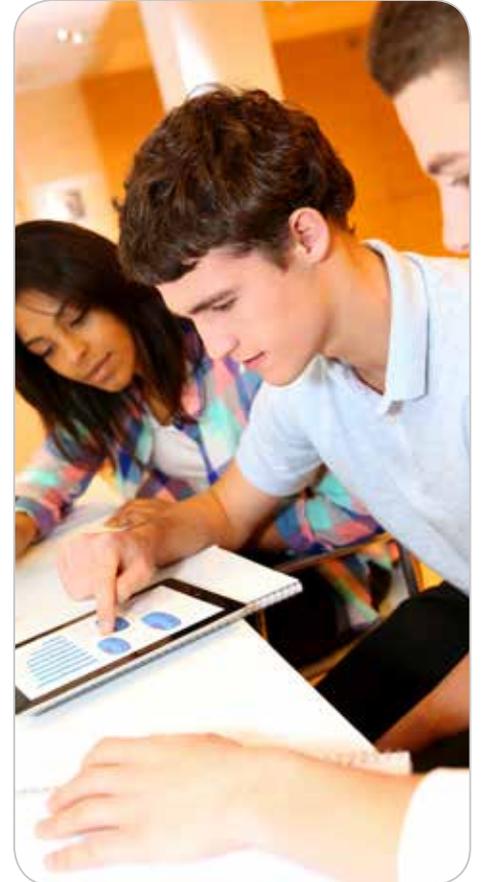


# Becoming a school governor in Coventry

A guide for those who would like to play a vital part in the education of children and young people in the City as a volunteer



# Introduction

Many people consider becoming Governors of schools, either because they have connections with their children's school or another local school or because they feel that they would like to contribute to the education of local children. I hope that you will do more than consider becoming a Governor and actually become one.

It is a fantastic feeling volunteering as a school governor and making a positive difference in a local school. It's equally amazing to have the opportunity to develop such a variety of transferable skills.

Governors in Coventry give freely of their time but in return know that they are assisting in a very real way the education of children and young people in Coventry.

There are a wide range of ways in which you can find out about being a Governor and some contacts are listed at the end of this leaflet. I do hope that when you have read the leaflet and found out a bit more about being a Governor you will join us in contributing to the development and improvement of schools in the city for the benefit of our children and young people.

Brian M Walsh  
Executive Director, People Directorate  
Coventry City Council



## What do School Governors do?

As a School Governor, you'll be part of a team. You'll agree the school's budget, covering everything from staffing to computers. You'll decide on the key issues which will help teachers to raise standards and to shape the future of the school. You don't need qualifications, just the desire to make a difference and a couple of spare evenings a month.

## Why is being a Governor such a vital task?

Being on the Governing Body means having the opportunity to help youngsters achieve their goals and ambitions. Governors make sure that staff have the right tools to broaden pupils' knowledge and widen their horizons. In essence it's about making things better.

- Governors make key decisions like appointing the Headteacher
- Governors' decisions directly affect the education and well-being of children
- Governors can really make a difference in improving standards throughout a school

## Who can be a Governor?

Anyone aged 18 or over and living in the UK can be a governor. There are many common misconceptions about what is required to be a governor.

## Popular misconceptions

### ***"I have no children"***

You don't need to have children, unless you are filling a parent governor vacancy.

### ***"I have no time"***

About 6-8 hours a month is the average time commitment and meetings are usually in the evenings.

### ***"I'm too young / old."***

You need to be 18 or over and able to attend meetings

### ***"I'm not experienced."***

You don't need specific qualifications to make a difference as a governor.



## What will I get out of being a school Governor?

Being a Governor gives you an insight into how schools meet the wide educational needs of their pupils. It's an interesting experience to work with different people to make things happen.

### Being a Governor also gives you:

- A part in improving children's education and supporting the school's staff
- A chance to develop new skills and to practise existing ones, such as chairing meetings, speaking in groups, asking questions, making suggestions and appointing staff
- A chance to help other members of the team, perhaps because they are new, are not used to committee work or need help in learning about the school and about school governance

## Do I need qualifications to be a school Governor?

No. Schools need volunteers (whether parents or not) with experience of life, but some Governors may have qualifications or professional skills.

A wide range of training opportunities exist for Governors and the City Council provide an annually revised Governor Training and Development Programme for Governors.

## Do I have the time to be a school Governor?

Some of the work Governors do is in their own time but there are Governing Body meetings and Committee meetings to attend, too. Governors' meetings sometimes take place during the working day but more often they are during the evenings.

Many school Governors are in full-time work and are able to balance their work commitments with being a Governor. But bear in mind, too, that you might want to spend time getting to know the school in other ways and joining its activities.

## What makes a good school Governor?

- You care about improving children's educational attainment
- You want to contribute to the local community
- You want to work as part of a team and can value the contribution made by different people
- You accept you might need training
- You are willing to ask questions
- You are open to ideas and willing to learn

## What can I offer?

- Enthusiasm and commitment
- If you are a parent, your own understanding of other parents' concerns. But you don't need to be a parent to be a good school Governor
- Whether you are a parent or not, as a member of the school's community your local knowledge will be valuable: you will have a feel for what is important to people
- If you happen to have business or other skills, schools might find these particularly helpful



## What do Governing Bodies do?

Governors, through their work on Governing Bodies, help to:

- Promote high standards of educational attainment
- Set the strategic direction for the school
- Set targets for pupil achievement
- Take general responsibility for the conduct of the school
- Manage the school's budget, including deciding how many staff will work there and their pay
- Make sure that the curriculum is balanced and broadly based, in particular that the National Curriculum and religious education are taught, and report on pupils' achievement in National Curriculum assessments and examination results
- Participate in the appointment of senior staff (including appointing the Headteacher) and regulate staff conduct and discipline
- Provide support and challenge to the school leadership to ensure that the school provides the best possible education for every child
- Agrees the policies and procedures under which the school will operate

## Who are the other Governors?

Governing bodies are made up of:

- Parents elected by other parents with children at the school
- The Headteacher (if the Headteacher chooses to be)
- Staff (teachers or support staff) elected by other staff
- People appointed by Coventry City Council as the local authority
- In Trust schools, people appointed by the foundation
- People chosen by Governors from the local community
- In church schools, people appointed by the church or foundation.

## How does a Governing Body work?

A Governing Body:

- Works closely with the Headteacher
- Makes decisions collectively as a team
- Often delegates decision making to committees or to the Headteacher
- Conducts most of its business through meetings, making use of relevant papers and guidance, and advice from the Headteacher and the clerk to the Governors



## How much time does it take?

Governors act as a team and, as such, the amount of time that each of them can give to the role will vary. Some people will be able and willing to give a lot throughout their time as a Governor. Others will find that the amount of time they can give increases or reduces during that period.

If you are serious about helping your school to help children, then you do need to:

- Be willing to prepare for meetings: there can be a lot of papers to read
- Attend meetings: the Governing Body must meet at least once a term, but you probably will be asked to serve on at least one committee. How often this meets will vary, but it is not unusual for some committees to meet each half-term
- Be able to get to meetings. These will usually be during the evening but they may be in the late afternoon or during the day
- Participate. You need to prepare for, and attend, meetings if you are to be able to help the school effectively.

## Will I be trained as a Governor?

There is no requirement on Governors to attend training to become a Governor or to remain as a Governor. However, most Governors take advantage of the range of training opportunities which exist from a number of sources.

Each Governing Body has funds available for training. The Services for Schools division of Coventry City Council have developed a programme of courses and other training activities which take place at our Training Centre just outside the city centre or are tailor made for delivery in the school.

## But what if I incur costs, like childcare?

Governing bodies are allowed to refund costs, for example, the cost of a carer for dependent relatives while you attend meetings. Each Governing Body is responsible for deciding which expenses to cover, if any.



## How do I become a School Governor?

There are many types of school governor. You can become a school Governor by:

### **Becoming a Parent Governor**

You can only become a Parent Governor if your child attends the school. Schools arrange elections for Parent Governors whenever there is a vacancy. Contact the school to find out if there is a vacancy coming up.

### **Becoming a Teacher or Support Staff Governor**

You can only become a Staff Governor if you are employed at the school. Schools arrange elections for Staff Governors whenever there is a vacancy. Contact your Headteacher to find out if there is a vacancy coming up.

### **Becoming a Local Authority Governor**

Coventry City Council appoints Governors to all schools in the City whenever vacancies occur. If you are interested in becoming an LA Governor, speak to your local Councillor or contact the Governor Support Services (see contacts below).

### **Becoming a Foundation Governor in a Church School**

Foundation Governors are appointed by the church authorities (see contacts on page??)

## **Becoming a Community Governor**

Community Governors are appointed by the other Governors on the Governing Body. To become a Community Governor, contact any existing Governor or, if you are not sure which Governing Body to join, the Children Learning and Young People Directorate's Governor Support Service (see contacts on page??)

## **What if my employer won't give me time off?**

Employment law gives people the right to reasonable unpaid time off and some employers give paid leave for school Governor duties. Many employers actually encourage their staff to become school Governors. They realise that the skills gained through being a school Governor are transferable to the workplace



## Useful contacts / finding out more

### Your local school

To find out about the Governing Body of your local school, contact the school.

### Coventry City Council

To find out the address and telephone number of schools in your area contact:

Governor Support Service  
Civic Centre 2  
Earl Street  
Coventry  
CV1 5RS  
Tel: 024 7683 1561

E-mail: [julie.macdonald@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:julie.macdonald@coventry.gov.uk) or  
[angela.carr@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:angela.carr@coventry.gov.uk)

For details of becoming an LA Governor or for training opportunities contact:

Dave Wallis  
Senior School Support Services Officer  
Civic Centre 2, Room 211  
Earl Street  
Coventry  
CV1 5RS  
Tel: 024 7683 1506

E-mail: [dave.wallis@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:dave.wallis@coventry.gov.uk)

## Regional Organisations

For details of becoming a Foundation Governor contact:

### For Church of England Schools:

Diocese of Coventry  
Diocesan Board of Education  
The Benn Education Centre  
Claremont Road  
Rugby  
CV21 3LU  
Tel: 01788 422800

### For Catholic Schools:

Archdiocese of Birmingham  
Diocesan Education Service  
61 Coventry Road  
Coleshill  
B46 3EA  
Tel: 01675 430230



## National Organisations:

### Information for School and College Governors

Avondale Park School  
Sirdar Road  
London  
W11 4EE  
Tel: 0207 7229 0200

E-mail: [iscg@Governors.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:iscg@Governors.fsnet.co.uk)

### National Governors' Association

Ground Floor,  
36 Great Charles Street  
Birmingham  
B3 3JY  
Tel: 0121 237 3780

E-mail: [governorhq@nga.org.uk](mailto:governorhq@nga.org.uk)  
Website: [www.nga.org.uk](http://www.nga.org.uk)

### Department for Education

The Department has a website at [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk).



*Acknowledgement: The text of this leaflet is based on the booklet "Help Schools Help Children", produced by the Department for Education and Employment, November 2000.*

## GSS Publications

The Governor Support Service has issued guidance on the following topics of interest to Governors. They are free of charge to Governing Bodies subscribing to either of our services and are available from the Governor Support Service, Civic Centre 2, Earl Street, Coventry CV1 5RS, Tel: 024 7683 1561, Fax: 024 7683 3624, e-mail: [dave.wallis@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:dave.wallis@coventry.gov.uk):

	The Heateacher's Report to Governors
	OFSTED Inspections: A guide for governors
	Governing Body Committees and Working Groups
	The Chair of Governors
	A Model Code of Conduct for governing bodies
	Becoming a Governor in Coventry (recruitment material)
	Governor Elections: Guidance for Head teachers on elections for parent and staff governors
	Governor Elections: Guidance for Head teachers on elections for parent and staff governors in catholic schools
	Governing Body Policies
	Monitoring and Visits to Schools by governors
	Governing Body Performance Review (self-review materials)
	Educational terms and abbreviations (published annually in September)
	Extended Schools: A guide for Governors
	Governors and Learners
	A Guide for New Governors in Coventry
	An Effective Governing Body

