

THE MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES OF FOUNDATION GOVERNORS

Foundation Governors are appointed for a four-year term by the Episcopal Vicar for Schools and Colleges, on behalf of the Archbishop, to represent the interests of the Trustees of the Archdiocese or, in schools under the Trusteeship of a Religious Order, by the person approved by the Order to make such appointments to serve the interests of their Trusteeship, working under the authority of the Archbishop.

Foundation Governors form the majority on a Catholic school's governing body. They have the responsibility of assisting the Bishop, by sustaining and developing the Catholic ethos and distinctive Catholic nature of the school in which they serve. They have a specific commission that takes the form of an undertaking to ensure that the school is at all times conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Archdiocesan Trust Deed.

The Instrument of Government contains a very important clause which specifies how the school must be run. It reads as follows:

“The school was founded by and is part of the Catholic Church. The school is to be conducted as a Catholic school in accordance with the Canon Law and teachings of the catholic Church, and in accordance with the Trust Deed of the Archdiocese of Liverpool, and in particular:

- a) religious education is to be in accordance with the teachings, doctrines, discipline and general and particular norms of the Catholic Church;*
- b) religious worship is to be in accordance with the rites, practices, discipline and liturgical norms of the Catholic Church: and at all times the school is to serve as a witness to the Catholic faith of Our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

This is a very clear statement to governors about the way in which they must conduct their school, and your particular attention is drawn to the last two lines, which prescribe that, in everything it does and in all aspects of its work, the school must serve as a witness to Our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, a Catholic school is not one which merely follows the secular National Curriculum with Catholic religious education and liturgical worship bolted on, but rather an institution where Gospel values and the Catholic faith are at the heart of everything and permeate every facet of its work.

Governors, along with the headteacher and senior school team, form the leadership team of the school. They have a crucial role in ensuring the school is successful in meeting the needs of all its pupils and achieving high standards.

They are, along with all other categories of governors, under a legal duty to conduct their school with a view to promoting high educational standards (Education Act 2002) and to promote the well-being of pupils at the school, promote community cohesion, have regard to any relevant Children and Young People Plan and to have regard to the views espoused by parents/guardians of registered pupils.

Governors in a voluntary aided school are the **employers of the staff**, both teaching and support staff. Some staff may be employed through a service agreement with an outside body. The Articles of Government sets out the procedure for the appointment and dismissal of staff.

Staff appointments are of particular importance since it is the staff who have the greatest influence on the ethos of the school. Governors should, in the first instance, seek to appoint Catholic teachers who combine personal conviction and practice of the Faith with the qualities and experience required by particular posts. They must adhere to the guidance given in the Bishops Memorandum on Appointments.

Governors have a **legal responsibility for the curriculum**, subject to the statutory provision for the National Curriculum. The Foundation Governors will ensure that the whole of the curriculum of the school is rooted in an understanding of life in conformity with the teaching of the Gospel and the Catholic Church. The schools in the Archdiocese must follow the schemes for Religious Education authorised by the Christian Education Department.

Governors are responsible for drawing up and **administering the admission criteria** for entry to the school. They should seek the guidance of the Archdiocese when undertaking this task. The Archdiocese has a policy to provide a place in a Catholic school for all children baptised in the Catholic tradition.

Governors are responsible for drawing up an **annual budget of expenditure** for the school in accordance with the funding delegated by the Local Authority (LA) and ensuring these funds are properly used.

Governors are responsible for **the school property**. They must ensure the premises are safe without risk to the health of staff, pupils and visitors. The condition of the building must be kept in a good state. They must also ensure that the school is adequately insured.

Governing Bodies are required to meet a minimum of three times each year. However, Governors will be expected to give much more time than this, serving on committees and working parties, to deal with the full responsibilities of governing their school. Governors are expected to attend the full meetings and failure to do so on a regular basis may result in a Governor being removed from office.

Foundation Governors are encouraged to try to attend the training sessions arranged by the Archdiocese as well as the appropriate training provided by the LA.

Foundation Governors will normally be practising and committed Catholics. Since holding office as a Foundation Governor is a form of ministry or service in the Church, those appointed will have to confirm they are eligible and willing to serve in accordance with the commission from the Archbishop.

Foundation Governors wishing to resign should inform the Chair of Governors, who will notify the Archdiocese of the need for a new appointment. On appointment, every Governor should receive from the Chair of Governors or the Clerk to the Governors a copy of the Instrument and the Articles of Government.