

**DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION
THE APPOINTMENT OF FOUNDATION GOVERNORS**

GUIDANCE TO PCCs

The Diocesan Board of Education values highly the voluntary service offered by the many foundation governors who give so generously of their time and talent in its schools. In a rapidly changing educational environment, this new guidance on the nomination and appointment of foundation governors seeks to support PCCs as they try to discern the suitability of foundation governors and insure that the church continues to be appropriately represented in our schools.

1. Background

- 1.1 Church schools were founded as a demonstration of Christian commitment to education, to serve the children and young people of their communities. Church schools have a 'Trust Deed', the legal document which founded the school. Today all church schools are also governed under Instruments of Government which contain an 'ethos' statement', adopted by the governing body to encapsulate the religious character of the school and its purpose.
- 1.2 Being a school governor is for many an expression of vocation to service within their community. *While all governors of church schools should act collectively in support of the religious foundation of the school, foundation governors have particular responsibilities to insure that the Christian ethos is preserved and developed.*
- 1.3 The Dearing review of Church of England Schools, 'The Way ahead' (2001) still provides many new challenges for church schools, not least of which surrounds the relationship between the school and the parish. Foundation governors are key people in growing this relationship.
- 1.4 The Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools (SIAS, Section 48), which accompanies the school's Ofsted (Section 5) inspection has, as its central question: '*How distinctive and effective is the school as a Church of England school?*' Within this inspection framework, the development of the Christian foundation is examined, and through assessment of the leadership and management of the

school, the contribution of foundation governors in developing the school's distinctiveness is recognised.

- 1.5 The 'Changing Lives' imperative has promoted new opportunities for outreach across the diocese. Church schools have an important part to play in this, and foundation governors will be central to this activity.
- 1.6 The General Synod motion (1998) that 'church schools stand at the centre of the church's mission to the nation', reaffirmed in the Dearing review, presents clear opportunities for the church to interpret its mission in relation to church schools. Foundation governors will provide an important steer in this exploration.
- 1.7 In the Diocese of Truro there are well over 500 foundation governors. The route to appointment is by the Diocesan Board of Education on a nomination from the Parochial Church Council or for Deanery Schools by nomination for the Deanery Synod. More important, however, in the light of all the above, is the need to insure that *all* foundation governors are suitably equipped and confident to serve their church school.

2. The particular responsibilities of Foundation Governors

- 2.1.1 The responsibility of the governing body is collective. Governors do not have the authority to act individually, unless instructed by the whole governing body. All governors have equal rights and responsibilities, and are not expected to be 'experts'. However, each governor will bring to bear their own skills and experience of life on the many issues presented to them.
- 2.2 Foundation governors have a particular responsibility to preserve and develop the religious foundation of the school. Foundation governors do *not* need to be members of the PCC. Each foundation governor should meet the legal requirements of all governors within their local authority. In addition, each foundation governor should be:
- *an active member of a Christian worshipping community;*
 - *committed to the work of education within a Christian context;*
 - *enthusiastic and active in promoting school and parish links;*
 - *checked through the CRB route;*
 - *willing to uphold the tenets of the school's Trust Deed*

2.3 In addition to their generic role as governors, foundation governors should undertake the following activities:

- *report back to the PCC regularly on the work of the school, with particular regard to the development of its Christian foundation;*
- *ensure that the School Development Plan includes strategy for the development of areas reflected in the SIAS 'toolkit';*
- *be prepared to offer challenge and support to the school and parish as they strengthen their links;**
- *ensure that the school is regularly promoted in the parish magazine/newsletter;*
- *be willing to undertake diocesan training for foundation governors;*
- *where applicable, liaise with diocesan children and young people's advisers from the parishes and deaneries' team*

3. The responsibilities of PCCs

3.1 As Church schools were once a 'gift' from the church to the nation, so now, in the twenty-first century, these same schools have become a gift to the church. They offer legitimate and creative opportunities for the church to work with children, young people and their families. Many churches are now, for example, contributing to the 'extended services' that the school offers, and PCC members will want to keep up to date with new opportunities and developments in their church schools. In appointing, or nominating foundation governors, PCCs are therefore asked to:

- actively review nominations when due for election;
- consider prayerfully the appointment of foundation governors in the light of the needs of the school;
- have regard for the experience of the 'ex-officio' governor (usually, but not always the parish priest) and their knowledge of the needs of the governing body;
- insure that nominations meet the criteria listed in 2 above.

4. Finding Foundation Governors!

4.1 There is no 'typical' foundation governor! In our diocese we have a wonderful mix of people of all ages, aptitudes and abilities. In

many cases a suitable person from the congregation offers their service - or sometimes with a little gentle 'nudging'! However, in seeking nominations, PCCs may like to:

- discuss the matter with the school (perhaps invite the headteacher or chair of governors to a PCC meeting or arrange for some PCC members to visit the school)
- bring the matter to the attention of the congregation in a Sunday service
- consult with other local churches (it is not essential that a foundation governor is a communicant Anglican)
- draw upon the expertise of the Diocesan Education Department

5. Support for your work

As part of its regular training programme, and in association with our local authority partners, the Diocesan Education Department offers courses for foundation governors. Please see our current training programme for details.