



Diocese of Portsmouth

Fact Sheet for those interested in becoming a Governor in a Catholic School

Catholic education in England and Wales needs YOU!

Did you know...

In England and Wales there are over 2,250 Catholic schools¹. This equates to approximately 10% of the national total of all schools across the two countries.

Catholic schools in England and Wales educate almost 843,000 pupils and employ more than 48,200 staff.

The percentage of Catholic schools which achieve Ofsted grades of 'good' or 'outstanding' is higher than the national average, even though our schools educate a larger share of pupils from the most disadvantaged communities.

Why are we telling you this? Because we want you to help us to ensure that Catholic education remains of a consistently high quality and that the future of Catholic education in England and Wales is preserved and developed. You can help us by volunteering to be a governor in one of our schools.

What does it mean to be a governor in a Catholic school?

All schools have governing bodies² made up of different categories of governors. All Catholic school governing bodies are made up of foundation governors but may also include parent governors, staff governors, the head teacher (or equivalent), local authority governors and co-opted governors.

The main role of the governing body is to operate at a strategic level, leaving the head teacher and senior school leaders responsible and accountable to the governing body for the operational day-to-day running of the school. As such, the three core functions of the governing body are:

- i. Ensuring clarity of the Catholic vision, ethos and strategic direction;

¹ In this Fact Sheet, the term 'Catholic schools' also includes Catholic academies and Catholic sixth-form colleges.

² A governing body is the generic term we use in this Fact Sheet to signify the entity that is responsible for conducting the school. It, and its members, may have different names in different types of schools.

- ii. Holding the head teacher to account for the educational performance and Catholic character of the school and its pupils; and
- iii. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

Foundation governors are specifically appointed by the Bishop to ensure the preservation and development of the school's Catholic character, to ensure that the school is being conducted as a Catholic school, and to represent the Bishop's education policy to the governing body. However, *all* categories of governor in a Catholic school are required to preserve and develop the Catholic character of the school in addition to their other legal duties. Foundation governors always outnumber all other governors by at least two so as to ensure a majority vote where matters of particular Catholic importance arise.

What type of person is suitable to be a governor in a Catholic school?

Governors come in all shapes and sizes and there is no magic formula when it comes to putting together a successful governing body. But it is important that each governing body has a good mix of skills, knowledge and experiences.

It is because not all governing bodies need the same skills, knowledge and experiences to be successful, that it is vital that individuals from *all* backgrounds volunteer to be a governor in a Catholic school so that Catholic school governing bodies have a wide breadth of skills to draw upon.

The Catholic Education Service (CES) has produced a model Governing Body Skills Audit which is a useful indicator of the types of skills, knowledge and experience that Catholic school governing bodies are looking for. The Skills Audit can be accessed on the CES website: <http://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/schools/guidance-for-schools/item/1000224-governance>

Requirements for particular categories of governor

The person appointing a potential governor needs to be satisfied that the particular individual has the skills required to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school.

In order to be considered for appointment as a foundation governor, you must be a practising Catholic³.

³ You will, as part of the nomination process, need to provide contact details for the Priest of the parish or chaplaincy in which you regularly worship in order that the Bishop may take up a reference verifying your Catholic practice. A practising Catholic is defined basically as someone who keeps the precepts of the Church, as summarised in the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church n. 432, namely:

- attends Mass on Sundays and other holy days of obligation;
- confesses their sins, receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation at least once each year;
- receives the sacrament of the Eucharist, at least during the Easter season;
- observes the days of fasting established by the Church; and
- helps provide for the material needs of the Church, according to ability.

As part of the nomination process you will need to demonstrate your commitment to the Catholic faith and your contribution to parish life and the Catholic community, as well as being able to articulate what you feel you are able to contribute to the Catholic life of a Catholic school if you are appointed as one of the Bishop's foundation governors.

If you are *not* a practising Catholic but are interested in becoming a governor at a Catholic school, you are strongly encouraged to contact schools@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk⁴.

As a requirement of the appointment process, all governors, regardless of category, will be required to consent to the carrying out of any appropriate checks, including Disclosure and Barring Service checks (previously Criminal Records Bureau Checks), in respect of eligibility/suitability to be appointed as a school governor. All governors will also need to be willing to commit to their role as governor. This will involve attending at least one governing body meeting per term⁵, serving on at least one committee of the governing body that meets once per term, attending training, participating in recruitment and visiting the school from time to time. As an indication, your governorship role should take no more than 10-12 hours per month.

Department for Schools

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⁴ There may be other eligibility criteria which must be satisfied to be considered for appointment to another category of governorship.

⁵ Based on a three term year.