

Recruiting Foundation Governors or Directors in the Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth



‘That they may have life to the full’

“The central aim of our schools is to make Jesus Christ better known and better loved, so that everyone in the school community might have life, and have it to the full (cf. John 10: 10). Schools and parishes are the two principal agencies of the diocesan mission. This has implications for school leaders and governors.” – The Future of our Diocesan Schools, Bishop Philip 2015

Interpretation

In this guidance, unless the context requires otherwise:

- the term school also refers to academies and sixth-form colleges;
- the term foundation governor(s) also refers to foundation directors and foundation governors appointed to local governing bodies;
- the term governing body also refers to academy trust company boards of directors and local governing bodies; and
- the terms diocese and diocesan include the relevant institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life (religious order) in all cases where the school is under such trusteeship.

Catholic Education in the Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth

Our vision for Catholic education is driven by the diocesan vision ***“Bringing people closer to Jesus Christ, through His Church”*** and Bishop Philip’s document in 2017 that set out his comprehensive vision for Catholic Schools in the Diocese, **‘That they may have life’**.

The pupils studying in our Catholic schools are entitled to the best opportunities we are able to give them at every stage, from early years to their transition into employment or higher education. Our schools must provide a good quality education to all their pupils, which places the knowledge and love of Christ at the centre of all. The responsibility of the Catholic School is, first and foremost, to *“help all its students to become saints”*.¹ Our duty is to prepare our students for adulthood, through an ever deepening and transformative relationship with Jesus Christ, that they may discern their true vocation and grow in holiness.



Our approach to Catholic schooling is reflected in the address by Pope Benedict XVI given to Catholic teachers and religious educators on the occasion of his 2010 visit to England. His Holiness reminded us then of our duty to go beyond imparting skills or information for economic benefit, or benefit to society, calling on our schools to form the entire human person and equip our pupils to *“live life to the full”*.²

The diocese recognises its responsibility to assist and encourage parents in their duty as primary educators of their children and so provides education in Catholic schools.

Our churches and our schools are the two principal agencies of this diocesan mission, forming intentional and missionary disciples. Our schools play an integral role in bringing the young people, their families and the staff of our diocese closer to Jesus Christ.

The vision for Catholic Education in the diocese builds upon a strong history of lived witness to Christ’s teachings in our schools. This reflects itself in a focus on educational excellence, high quality liturgy and prayer and outreach to the most vulnerable.



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Don't wait until you have a vacancy

If you wait until you have a vacancy for a foundation governor then it is likely you are going to struggle or end up with a limited choice. It's better to have an on-going programme of informing parents and your local and parish community about the work of your governing body - think of sowing seeds that may blossom.

Help people understand the role of governors in your school and across the diocese. You could:

- Run an information session or taster where parents can meet existing governors. This might include teaming up with other local Catholic schools to run a joint event. Advertise it via school and parish newsletters, websites and social media.
- Include a friendly, interesting and jargon-free section on the work of your governors that shows how governors have made an impact on the pupils' education on the school website;
- Consider other ways you could raise the profile of your governing body – e.g. place articles on recent governor initiatives in the school newsletter, check that appropriate communications are jointly signed by both the headteacher and chair of governors, include information in your prospectus and information for new parents, place photos and mini profiles of governors in your reception area; make use of social media;
- Make information on school governance available at school events such as meetings for new parents, parents' evenings, open evenings, sports days and PTA events.



- Why not have a 'governors table' at your Christmas bazaar and/or summer fair?

Regularly consider what skills your governing body needs. All governors need:

- a strong commitment to the role and to improving outcomes for children
- the inquisitiveness to question and analyse
- willingness to learn
- good inter-personal skills
- appropriate levels of literacy in English (unless a governing body is prepared to make special arrangements)
- sufficient numeracy skills to understand basic data. Be clear if your board is looking for particular skills e.g. expertise in finance but see also Tapping into Local Groups!

Build strong links with your parish priest

- Your parish priest will play a key role in helping you to find foundation governors.
- Contact your local parish(es) to see if their newsletter would include an article about the work of your governors this year & advertise for new governors.
- Ask your parish priest if a governor could speak at masses on Education Sunday about the work of governors

and have a table at back of church with information and governors willing to answer questions etc.

requirements but issues can be discussed in confidence with the Diocesan Education Service.

Tap into local groups

- Contact local Catholic groups (e.g., Catenians, SVP, UCM) to see if you could visit and explain the role of a foundation governor.

The personal approach

- Sometimes the best way to recruit a suitable candidate is by drawing up a list of people whom members of the board think would fit the bill and targeting them yourself. Picking up the phone and asking if they are interested is quick and can be effective. It is, however, important to be clear that at this point you are just asking if they are interested; they will still need to apply and follow the appropriate process. Bear in mind that it is important that the board does not become a clique and is not perceived to be one.
- Help potential governors and their bosses to understand that they will benefit too by developing new skills.



Use other sources of ideas and information

- Check with local governors services to see if they have any volunteers or your local volunteers bureau.
- Contact SGOSS – Governors for Schools (<https://www.sgoss.org.uk>) or Inspiring Governance (<http://www.inspiringgovernors.org>)

Dispel myths

- Some potential governors may have misplaced concerns about their ability to fill this role.
- Reassure those worried about the skills required that training and support are available to help them be effective governors.
- Be honest about the time commitment but remember that there are peaks and troughs during the school year with fewer commitments generally during school holidays. New governors will generally start with a lesser commitment, e.g., they will be unlikely to have to start as the chair of a major committee.
- Some governors may worry about meeting particular diocesan

Be clear on the skills, knowledge, experience etc. you are looking for

A governor vacancy can be seen as an opportunity to review the current skills and experience of the governing body and identify any gaps that could potentially be filled by a new governor.

Carry out a skills audit

When you know you have a vacancy for a foundation governor coming up arrange to carry out a skills audit. The CES have devised a Governors Skills Audit for Catholic schools. This should be completed regularly but can be particularly useful when you are about to recruit for a new foundation governor.

The audit covers the following areas:

- Skills, knowledge and experience relating to the Catholic character of the school.
- Governance
- Staff matters
- Data
- Community matters
- Handling conflict
- Skills particular to an educational setting
- Professional skills
- Other skills, knowledge and experience.

The analysis of the audit can help identify gaps and these can then feature in your advert and recruitment pack for prospective governors.

Principles and personal attributes

The principles and personal attributes that individuals bring to the governing body are as important as their skills and knowledge. These

qualities enable board members to use their skills and knowledge to function well as part of a team and make an active contribution to effective governance.



All those elected or appointed to boards should fulfil their duties in line with the seven principles of public life (the Nolan principles). They should also be mindful of their responsibilities under equality legislation, recognising and encouraging diversity and inclusion. They should understand the impact of effective governance on the quality of education and on outcomes for all children and young people. In addition, all those involved in governance should be:

Committed - Devoting the required time and energy to the role and ambitious to achieve best possible outcomes for young people. Prepared to give time, skills and knowledge to developing themselves and others in order to create highly effective governance.

Confident - Of an independent mind, able to lead and contribute to courageous conversations, to express their opinion and to play an active role on the board.

Curious - Possessing an enquiring mind and an analytical approach and understanding the value of meaningful questioning.

Challenging - Providing appropriate challenge to the status quo, not taking information or data at face value and always driving for improvement.

Collaborative - Prepared to listen to and work in partnership with others and understanding the importance of building strong working relationships within the board and with

executive leaders, staff, parents and carers, pupils/students, the local community and employers.

Critical - Understanding the value of critical friendship which enables both challenge and support, and self-reflective, pursuing learning and development opportunities to improve their own and whole board effectiveness.

Creative - Able to challenge conventional wisdom and be open-minded about new approaches to problem-solving; recognising the value of innovation and creative thinking to organisational development and success.



Does your governing body reflect your school, parish and local communities?

Just as our schools are incredibly diverse and culturally rich places, it is vital that our governing boards reflect that diversity and that richness too. This means we need to do more to encourage those who may not ever have considered volunteering as a governor or trustee, but who still have so much to offer, who could bring a fresh perspective or a specific skill that a board really needs. We especially need more young people and more people from multi ethnic backgrounds to come forward. So I urge you to look at the way you advertise vacancies and use your networks to encourage others to consider becoming a governor or trustee."

The Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP, Secretary of State for Education, at NGA's annual conference 2021

Why is it important to have a diverse governing board?

Adding new governors or trustees to the governing board who are reflective of (but not representatives of) the community the school serves can help it make better decisions in the interest of all pupils.

There are several benefits to creating a diverse governing board:

It helps to avoid groupthink: where the people making decisions are similar, there can be a keenness to reach a consensus and therefore a lack of critique. When the people around the table come from different places and think different things there is sufficient challenge which helps to ensure robust decision making.

Setting a culture for equality and diversity to thrive is a critical role of the governing board. By committing to diversifying itself, the governing board will set an example about inclusion from the top down and be a catalyst for achieving diversity at all levels of the organisation. A good starting point is for the board to adopt its own diversity policy.

Seeing governors and trustees from ethnic minorities provides role models for young people and can give them confidence in what they can achieve. As an important part of the leadership of the school, a governing board is also an important role model for parents, staff and the wider community.

Having a diverse governing board provides a connectedness between the school and its community, and ensures all stakeholders feel valued. It can increase the confidence of the community in the school because those making decisions understand the lives, context and aspirations of the community it serves.

Advertising your vacancy

What to include in an advert

When advertising a vacancy, you should:

- Understand the barriers that might dissuade your target audience from applying – provide potential new volunteers with all the information and encouragement they need.
- Be specific about the skills, knowledge, attributes and characteristics you’re looking for.
- Make the information you provide accessible to all potential volunteers – avoid unnecessary formality and ensure it’s free of jargon. Check that imagery and language is inclusive.
- We recommend that you provide the following information to potential volunteers:
- An outline of what school governance is and who can do it (make clear that experience of the education system is not a prerequisite).
- Information about the school, its ethos, values and vision.
- A description of the role, using real examples of governance activities and the work that your board carries out (meetings, reading, training, school visits etc.).
- Any opportunities that exist for volunteers to develop existing skills and learn new ones.
- Let potential volunteers know that they will receive out of pocket expenses such as any childcare or travel costs required to carry out their governance role.
- A quote from someone on your governing board may be helpful as an opportunity for them to share their experiences and model the role as enjoyable, manageable and rewarding.
- A clear ‘call to action’: what you want anybody who is interested to do next.

- You don’t need to put all of this information in an initial advert – instead, you could include the main messages then make further information available on a web page. When you do receive interest in the vacancy, reply as soon as possible; make sure that school administration staff know who to direct enquiries to.

Where to promote your vacancy

Use a range of communication channels to promote your vacancy so that everyone with the potential to fulfil the role has an equal opportunity to find out about it and to apply. Avoid relying solely on personal and/or professional connections and word-of-mouth.

- Place a prominent advert on the school or trust website.
- Send a letter home to parents/carers or include information in the school newsletter.
- Place adverts/posters around the school.
- Have a governing board presence at school events to talk about vacancies.
- Post on the school’s social media, monitor and respond to any comments.
- Share your social media post in local community or social groups – Facebook and Twitter can be particularly effective. Encourage existing board members to share your posts with their social media connections.
- Try including photographs from the school, graphics or a short video.
- The local parishes, particularly those served by the school, will be a rich source of potential applicants so ensure any advert, recruitment materials are shared and made available.
- Contact any local university chaplains who may know of staff who may be interested.
- Contact potential volunteers directly using a leaflet or letter.
- The **Academy Ambassadors Programme** provides a free, bespoke

service matching business people and professionals with academy trusts looking to strengthen their boards.

Targetting underrepresented groups

- Be explicit that you are seeking applicants with particular characteristics (eg from an ethnic minority, of a particular gender, with a disability) and explain why you are doing so.
- Directly approach people from underrepresented groups that you think would be a good governor/trustee – it is not enough to have an open door, you need to invite people through.
- Give people from underrepresented groups less formal opportunities to be involved in governance (such as coming to speak to the board about their community or culture and how this impacts pupils) before asking them to apply.
- Approach people who already volunteer in other aspects of school life, for example the PTA or reading with children.
-

- Highlight the skills that young professionals can contribute but also gain, drawing a parallel between their experience and what they can contribute to the board.
- Work with established community groups, specialist media and community figures.
- Consider how your board can do things differently (such as varying meeting times) to appeal to a more diverse, busy audience.
- Accept that younger people may be more transient and that having their contribution for a couple of years will be better than rejecting them completely because you do not think they could serve a full term.
- Recruit for potential rather than perfection – if a volunteer shows the right signs that they could be a great governor or trustee, investing in them (with training and support) could help you to make valuable new additions to your board



DIOCESE OF PORTSMOUTH
VACANCY
Foundation Governor(s)

XXXX School

Closing Date for applications: XXXXX

A vacancy for Foundation Governor on the governing body has arisen and expressions of interests are being sought from practising committed Catholics for the ministry.

The term of office is for four years from the date of appointment.

Foundation Governors are personally appointed by Bishop Philip, Bishop of Portsmouth to diocesan schools to represent his interests and those of the Catholic community as a whole.

The governors of a Catholic school work as a team, in close co-operation with the headteacher and all the staff. Foundation governors share the responsibilities of all governors:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff; and
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

In addition to this, foundation governors are appointed specifically to ensure:

- that the religious character of the school is preserved
- that the school is conducted in accordance with its trust deed
- that the religious education curriculum is in accordance with the Bishop's policy for this Diocese

The school would benefit from people with skills/experience. The school would particularly welcome interest from a background in order to help the governing body better represent the rich cultural mix of the school.

*delete or amend accordingly

Anyone interested in the mission of foundation governor should not be put off by a lack of experience. Appropriate training is available during the period of service.

NOMINATION FORMS ARE AVAILABLE FROM:

The School Office
or
Catholic Academies and Schools Office
St Edmund House
Bishop Crispian Way
Portsmouth
PO1 3QA
governors@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk
Tel: 023 9289 3600

Advice on speaking at Mass

An essential criteria for a foundation governor is that they are a practising Catholic.

Therefore, potential foundation governors are likely to be found at Mass on a Sunday. Talking to the congregation can be a fruitful way to get across how the governing body contributes to the Catholic life of the school and the parish.



Points that may help when speaking at a Mass

- Be positive and be short – arrange to be at the back of church after mass with more detailed information for anyone who is interested in the role, for example copies of the CES bookmark which can also be found in this pack.
- Refer to some of your own experiences to illustrate what governors do. But not too many as you need to keep this brief!
- Refer to what you have gained from being a governor e.g. you may have learnt new skills such as interpreting data or learnt from the wide range of people on your governing body.
- Be honest about the time commitment but remember a new governor probably won't need to commit as much time as the chair does.

- Be clear if you are looking for particular skills in a new governor.
- Some people may be hesitant; mention the support and training available for new governors e.g. a buddy governor.
- Explain what to do next if someone is interested.
- It is important to stress that this is part of the mission of the church: helping Catholic schools to enable pupils to explore the wonder of God's love.

Possible format:

- Introduce yourself and your role
- Explain why you are speaking
- Explain what a foundation governor is: They are appointed by the Bishop to represent his education policy in diocesan schools. They preserve and develop the Catholic ethos of the school.
- Explain what governors do and give at most 1 or 2 examples of how the governors have had an impact on the pupils' experiences at your school:
 - Ensure the Catholic ethos of the school is upheld.
 - Work with the headteacher and hold him/her to account.
 - Oversee the financial performance of the school and set the budget.
 - Manage the school's admissions criteria.
 - Recruit senior leaders.
- Be clear there is help and support including training and help for new governors.
- Explain the time commitment: 10-12 (amend this to your requirements) hours a month including attending one governing body meeting per term and serving on one committee (min. requirement).
- Say that there is more information at the back of the church and that you will be there if anyone wants to know more or if they are interested in hearing about the next step to becoming a governor.
- Explain what you have gained from the role and what you enjoy most about being a governor.

The application process

it is important to remember that when you are recruiting foundation governors you are doing so on behalf of the Bishop. Appointments, including the allocation of governors to specific schools, is in his gift and at his discretion.

Points to remember when supporting applicants through the diocesan application process to become foundation governors.

- Explain to any potential foundation governor that they are applying to be a foundation governor in the Diocese of Portsmouth. They can express a preference for a specific school but the diocese, on behalf of the Bishop, will appoint them to where their schools can be used most effectively to support Catholic education in the diocese.
- In reality, if there is a vacancy, applicants tend to be appointed to the school they have named, however, it is important they are made aware that this is not guaranteed.
- The most up to date nomination form should always be used. This can be found on the relevant page of the CASO website or by contacting governors@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

nomination forms are sent out from the school office, these need to be accompanied by the following documents:

- Being a Foundation Governor or Director in the Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth
- Nomination Form – Guidance



- All nomination forms **must** be sent to CASO to be processed. Schools are not permitted to shortlist applications and only send those they are interested in through to CASO.
- CASO will take up the applicant's references, including one from their parish priest. They will also consult the headteacher and chair of governors of any schools named by the applicant.
- Relevant paperwork will then be forwarded to the Bishop's Office for a decision regarding their suitability to be a foundation governor and, if deemed suitable, which school they will be appointed to.
- The applicant and school will then be notified.
- The school will need to carry out the relevant safeguarding checks.

Don't forget to value the governors you already have

Ideally, once you have found a foundation governor that fits in well and makes a valid contribution to the work of governing body, you will be able to keep them for further terms of office. Retention is as important as recruitment. Make sure your governors are well trained, and feel supported, involved and valued.

Induction

- Friendly support and a structured induction help new governors understand their role and feel part of the team.
- Encourage your new governors to attend any induction training provided by the local authority and diocese.
- As part of their induction, ensure they meet with the training liaison governor to discuss any gaps in their knowledge/experience and how these can be addressed.
- Prepare a concise induction pack for new governors to introduce them to the school and the governing body.
- Use a buddy/mentor to help new governors to appreciate some of the key issues facing the governing body and how their skill set/knowledge can help.

Ongoing Support

- Encourage all governors to attend training – both that provided by

the local authority and the diocese.

- Regularly report on the work of the governing body in school publications, e.g. newsletter, and the school website. Ensure the work of the governing body and/or individual governors are referenced and thanked.
- Regularly review the timing and structure of meetings to ensure they support both the work that needs to be done and also the needs of governors. Does the timing and/or frequency of meetings prevent particular groups from considering being a governor or being able to participate fully?
- Review the membership of committees annually. Don't automatically leave the same governors on the same committees year after year. All groups need new ideas, all individuals need new challenges t



The Next Steps

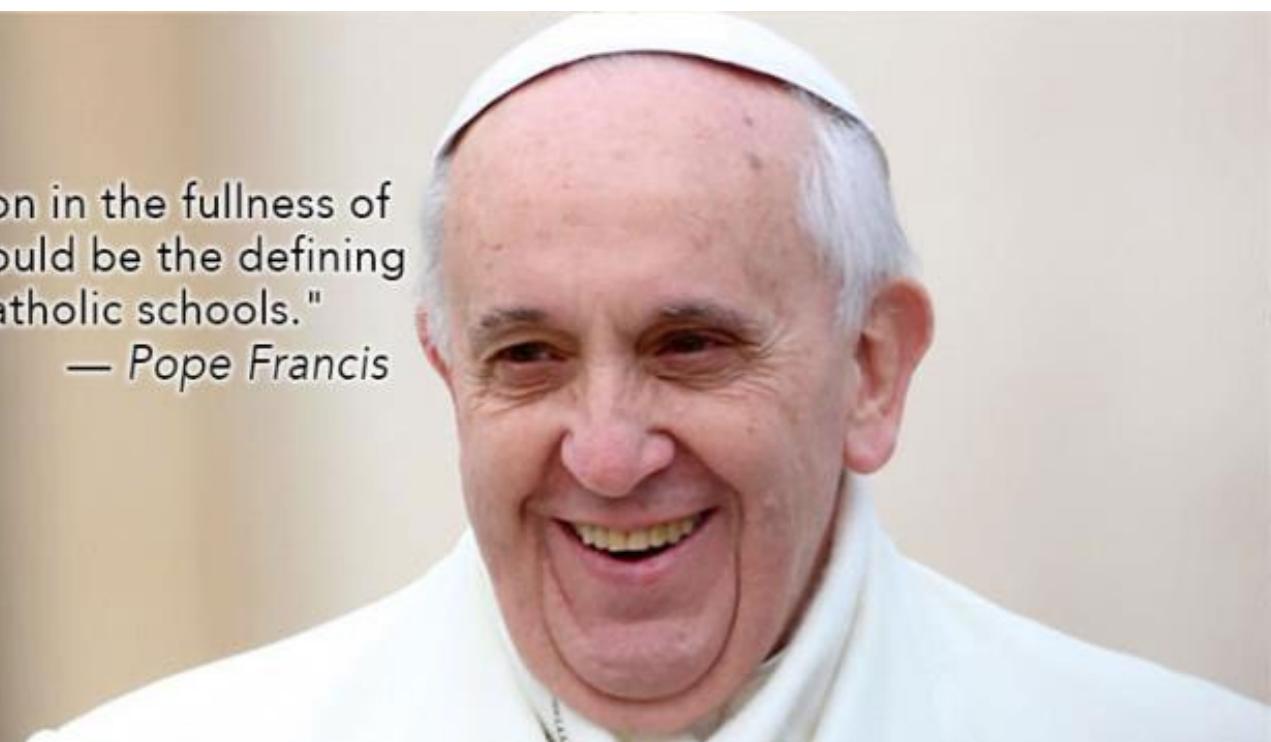
If you have a forthcoming vacancy for a Foundation Governor or Director and would like to discuss this further then the Catholic Academies and Schools Office will be happy to help.

Please contact:

Robert Dare
Diocesan School Support Officer
governors@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

"An education in the fullness of humanity should be the defining feature of Catholic schools."

— Pope Francis





Catholic Academies and Schools Office
St Edmund House
Bishop Crispian Way
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02392 893600

www.casoportsmouth.org.uk

governors@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk