

Being a Foundation Governor or Director in the Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth



‘That they may have life to the full’

“Our Catholic schools exist to make Jesus Christ better known and better loved, through the on-going education and formation of all their members (teachers, staff, pupils, governors and parents) as disciples of

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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Introduction

Are you looking for a way to live out your faith and serve your local community at the same time?

If so, becoming a Foundation Governor could be just the thing for you.

There are more than 2200 Catholic schools in England and Wales, making the Church the largest provider of primary education in the country.

Within the Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth, there are 68 Catholic schools – 56 voluntary aided/academies, and 12 independent schools. 50 are primary or first schools, 12 secondary or middle, and 6 are all-through schools.

Foundation governors and directors play an important part in maintaining and developing the Catholic character of these schools.

This booklet will explain the role of a Foundation Governor and how you can go about applying.

'Being a foundation governor has allowed me to be a more practical, practising Catholic. I have always worked as a public servant and being in school governance has enabled me to not only broaden my public service but to do so within the context of my Church and my faith – it is a "win-win" situation.'

Captain Marc Evans, Chair of Governors, Oaklands Catholic Secondary School and Sixth Form College



What is a Foundation Governor?

All schools have a governing body comprising of different types of governors, for example parent- governors, teacher-governors etc.

In addition to these categories, governing bodies in Catholic schools also include Foundation Governors, these Foundation Governors will always form a majority.

Foundation governors work alongside other governors to form a governing body who are responsible for the overall direction of the school.

The main role of a governing body is to operate at a strategic level, ensuring that the Catholic vision and character of the school is upheld, holding the headteacher and leadership team to account and overseeing the financial performance of the school.

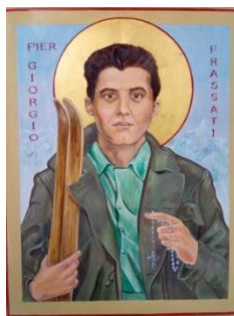
Governors also set the budget, manage the school's admissions criteria and are involved in the recruitment of senior leadership.



'I consider being a foundation governor to be a great privilege - it's fantastic having a window into a professional area of work that is so very different from my own area of expertise - even better when you know that your endeavours have had a positive impact on outcomes for children!'

Liz Holford, St Peter's Primary, Waterlooville

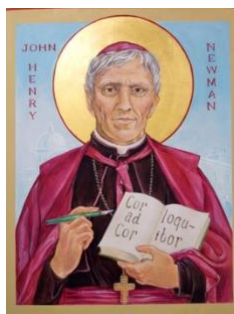




Foundation Governors are appointed by the local Bishop specifically to preserve and develop the Catholic ethos of the school and represent the Bishop's education policy (e.g. worship and religious education) to the governing body.



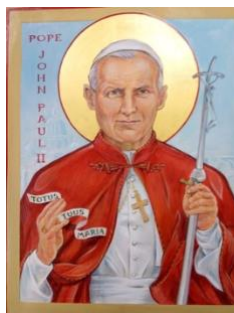
This is why Foundation Governors will always outnumber other governors.



Foundation governors take a particular interest and responsibility for admissions to the school, the employment of staff, Religious Education, Relationships Education, the prayer life of the school and for ensuring that the Bishop's directives are implemented. Foundation governors have the further duty of assisting the Bishop in his role as first teacher and leader of the diocese.



There is no magic formula about what makes a perfect Foundation Governor, they come from all walks of life and all ages. But it is important that each governing body has a good mix of skills, knowledge and experience.



The Catholic Academies and Schools Office manages the administration process for the appointment of Foundation Governors on behalf of the Bishop. CASO also provides support to governing bodies in carrying out their responsibilities.

Responsibilities and Time Commitments

The average Foundation Governor role will take up about 10-12 hours per month. However, this can vary depending on the school calendar or by events, such as an Ofsted Inspection or Catholic School Inspection.

This commitment includes the minimum requirement of attending three full governor meetings per year and serving on at least one committee.

The committees will focus on areas such as finance, curriculum, pupil progress and site management.

Governors are appointed for a 4-year term of office, after which they can be reappointed or pass the role on to someone else. Consequently, we are always seeking new foundation governors to serve in our Catholic schools.

It is important to recognise that for most new governors it can all be a bit baffling to begin with and all need support. Training and advice will be provided by the diocese, the local authority and most crucially by fellow governors. You are not on your own, governors work as a team supporting and challenging the school leadership.

'When I became a governor, I knew virtually nothing about the school and very little about education except my own experiences and those of our children. There was a bewildering new vocabulary to learn and unfathomable mnemonics to decipher. However, within a short space of time experiencing the dedication and skill of the staff, the commitment of fellow governors and most of all the joy of the children, I was hooked and came to realise that as a governor, you can do something really worthwhile.'

Ian Looseley, St Saviour's Primary School



'I've been a foundation governor for a number of years, the role is incredibly fulfilling, being able to support and safeguard the Catholic ethos of our school is so important to me, to know that future generations will benefit from the grounding, love and care of the Catholic education that both my children and I received is well worth the time and commitment needed. I would encourage anyone to consider serving on a governing body. '

Sam Humphrey, St Walburga's Primary, Bournemouth

Do I fit the Criteria?

Governors come in all shapes and sizes. But it is important that each governing body has a good mix of skills, knowledge and experiences.

Because not all governing bodies need the same skills, to be successful, it is vital that individuals from all backgrounds volunteer to be a Foundation Governor.

Any practising Catholic over the age of 18 can become a Foundation Governor. A reference from your Parish Priest will be taken up as part of the application process.

Nominees would not be expected to have a direct knowledge of current education law, of school organisation or governance but should be willing to learn and dedicate reasonable time to their responsibilities.

You do not need teaching experience and it is useful to bring skills from all areas of your life, such as financial, human resources, buildings, health and safety, safeguarding, parish work and community work. Schools are also looking for governors who reflect the ethnic, cultural and social background of their catchment area.



'As a foundation governor of 10 years, I find it hugely rewarding. As well as helping to protect the Catholic ethos of our schools, it is a wonderful opportunity to help make a difference to children's lives. The experience has personally boosted my confidence and given me so many new skills.'

Julia Evans, St Edmund Campion Primary, Maidenhead



The Application Process

If you think you might make a good Foundation Governor, you should express an interest by talking to your Parish Priest, the Chair of Governors or Headteacher. Alternatively contact the Catholic Academies and Schools Office (CASO) to discuss further.

The Foundation Governor nomination form can be found on the diocesan website under the recruiting section within the leadership section.

<https://staging.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk/caso/applying-to-be-a-foundation-governor/>

Simply complete and return the form.

When a school has been identified, we will then process your application form, seeking all references and consulting with the school, before passing all the documentation to the Bishop for consideration.

'I believe God has given me certain talents and skills and wants me to use them for the good of my neighbour. What better way to use them than in helping students achieve their full potential and, at the same time, foster their spiritual journey. There is real joy in seeing students prosper in these ways. I can do this by being a Foundation Governor.'

David Knight, St Edmund's Secondary School, Portsmouth



FAQ

Q: What is the difference between a foundation governor and a foundation director?

A foundation governor is linked to one school and its governing body. If the school is an academy they will be a foundation governor on a local governing body. A foundation director is part of the board of directors for an academy trust, and as such will have responsibilities towards all the schools in the academy trust.

Q: How do you define a practising Catholic?

A practising Catholic is defined as someone who keeps the precepts of the Church, as summarised in the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Q: I am not a practising Catholic but I would like to become a governor. What do I do?

If you are not a practising Catholic but are interested in becoming a governor at a Catholic school, you are strongly encouraged to contact your diocese to discuss other options.



'It is an opportunity to share your experience, to contribute to and become involved in your local community. It is exciting to watch the children in our care grow and blossom.'

Brigid Hincks, St Joseph's Primary,
Christchurch

Q: What are safeguarding checks?

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.

Checks for prospective foundation governors are carried out by the diocesan safeguarding team and must be complete before any appointment is made by the Bishop.



The Next Steps

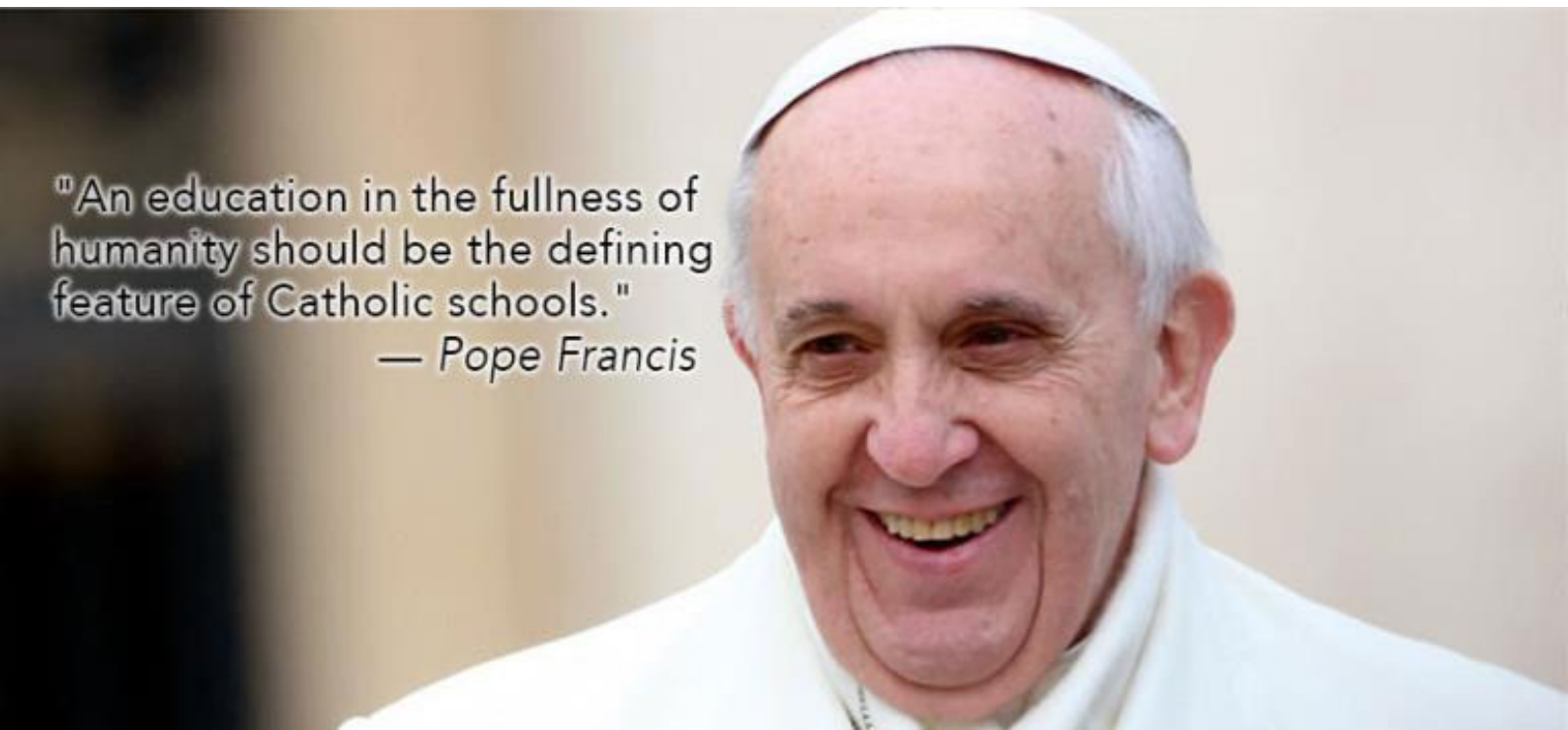
If you are interested in becoming a Foundation Governor or Director but would like some more information about the role generally or specifically in relation to your local area the Catholic Academies and Schools Office will be able to help.

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

Notes



A good school provides a rounded education for the whole person. And a good Catholic school, over and above this, should help all its students to become saints.

Pope Benedict XVI





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