

Policy on Foundation Governors in Church of England Voluntary Aided (VA) and Voluntary Controlled (VC) schools

Rationale for this Policy

This policy explains the process by which Foundation governors are appointed to Church of England VA and VC schools within the Diocese of Exeter. **This policy is to be implemented from 1st January 2021.**

The Role of Foundation Governors

The inclusion of foundation governors on the governing boards of both VA and VC church schools is one of the distinguishing characteristics of church school education. Foundation governors represent the historic link with the original church establishment (the 'founding' establishment, hence the term 'foundation') of the school. As such, they are the custodians of its distinctive Christian ethos.

In most ways, foundation governors have the same objectives as other governors. Along with their fellow governors, they are entrusted with responsibility for the core roles of governors, set out in the Department for Education's 'Governance Handbook' namely:

- setting vision, ethos and strategic direction
- holding the Headteacher to account for teaching, achievement, behaviour and safety, and challenging and strengthening their leadership
- ensuring finances are managed well leading to probity, solvency and effective use of resources

In addition, as representatives of the church's role in the school, foundation governors must:

- fully support, cherish, preserve and develop the distinctive Christian ethos of the school, ensuring that the school has a distinctive Christian vision and values which lead to effective practice and outcomes
- preserve and strengthen the links between church, school and diocese
- take an active role in the school's self-evaluations of progress against the 'Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools' (SIAMS) schedule
- monitor the collective worship and religious education at the school
- monitor that the distinctive Christian ethos of the school is encouraged and supported throughout its local community and is reflected in its policies, protocols, curriculum and activities
- ensure that their own attitudes and behaviour in relation to the school reflect its distinctive Christian ethos
- inform the EDBE when the school leader's post becomes vacant and, in partnership with the Chair of Governors, invite a representative of the Diocesan Board of Education to advise, support and attend the appointment procedure

The Appointment of Foundation Governors within Church of England VA and VC Schools

The number of foundation governors which serve a school is specified in the 'instrument of government'. When a foundation governor vacancy arises at a VA or VC school the Chair of Governors must:

- instruct the Clerk to the Governors to inform the EDBE and ensure that a recruitment and appointment process is underway to fill the vacancy
- send a copy of the resignation letter to the EDBE and the date the governor is expected to leave
- ensure that there is a description of the skills identified as being required on the governing board (following a skills audit as appropriate)

The governing board may nominate prospective candidates for the vacancy by providing the Parish Church Council (PCC) / Exeter Diocesan Board of Education (EDBE) with a candidate profile and contact details. All nominees will need to complete the appropriate foundation governor nomination form and return this to EDBE. If there are more candidates with appropriate references than there are vacancies, the EDBE will consider the skills and experience of each candidate against the skills audit provided by the school.

EDBE will make the final decision over whether to approve the nomination and appoint, but will liaise with the Chair of Governors as part of this process. A welcome letter will be issued via the clerk to governors to the new or renewing foundation governor upon their approval by EDBE. A copy should be retained by the clerk for your records. The appointment will depend upon the completion of a satisfactory enhanced DBS check and declarations and adherence to the applicable Code of Conduct. It is a requirement that the foundation governor attends EDBE Church School Induction training within twelve months of appointment. Governors on re-appointment are expected to attend refresher training.

Criteria for Foundation Governors

The EDBE asks PCCs to consider and nominate candidates who meet the ‘EDBE Requirements of Foundation Governors’ detailed in this policy.

- Regular worshipper at Church of England services
- Regular worshipper within one of the Member Churches of ‘Churches Together in Britain and Ireland’ (CTBI)
- By exception, an individual may be appointed as Foundation governor who is not a regular worshipper at one of the churches in the groups listed above, but a person who is committed to uphold the Christian Ethos of the school.

A reference from the relevant church leader must be provided by everyone putting their name forward for consideration as a foundation governor. When the ‘exception’ criteria is being used, the nominee is required to meet with the ex-officio Foundation Governor or local incumbent. It is important that the PCC work with the school to ensure that the makeup of the governing board includes sufficient foundation representation with the right skills. It is the role of local clergy to interpret for their community the word ‘regular’ in relation to their attendance for worship as used in this policy.

The following should be noted:

- School staff cannot be appointed as Foundation Governors for the school in which they work
- Spouses and partners should not be appointed to the same governance board but can be considered for a neighbouring school if there are vacancies
- Governors should not be appointed to more than two governance boards at any one time

Foundation Governors will not usually be able to serve for more than two consecutive terms of office (i.e. eight years) on the same governance board but can serve a new term of office for a governance board at a different school. This is to be implemented from 1st September 2021.

EDBE will consider exceptions to re-appoint for a third term of office. The exceptions include:

- Organisational changes
- Lack of skilful governors on a board
- A large number of vacancies on a governing board
- Leadership changes

Ex- Officio Foundation Governor

All church schools have an ex officio foundation governor seat on their governance board which is reserved for the incumbent of the parish. This is confirmed by the ‘instrument of government’ of the school. This document will specify the parish concerned. The ex officio foundation governor remains a governor of the school for as long as he/she is in post.

It is the role of the archdeacon to appoint a substitute foundation governor if the incumbent chooses not to take up the role or there is a vacancy in the parish. The EDBE therefore requires incumbents, who, for any reason, do not feel able to take up the ex officio post on a school’s governance board, to inform the archdeacon and the EDBE so that the archdeacon can seek to appoint a suitable person in place of the incumbent.

Policy implemented:	Policy to be reviewed:	Policy approved:
1 st January 2021	Autumn 2023	15 th July 2020 SOGG Committee