



## **We need a parent governor at WFS.**

### ***WHAT IS EXPECTED OF A PARENT GOVERNOR?***

*Governors are in a unique position on a Governing Body. Not only do parent governors have to work in the best interests of the school, but they have to balance this with their natural desire to see the best outcomes for their own child(ren). The aim of this information is to provide details on the specific role of a parent governor and suggestions for how to deal with some of the tricky situations which may arise.*

#### The Role of the Governing Body

The Governing Body acts collectively and the first loyalty of every governor must be to the school. Governors support the staff and headteacher of the school but also act as a 'critical friend.' The role is strategic, not operational. This means that the role of the Governing Body is to plan long term for the school, make sure it is well staffed and spends its budget wisely, and to help construct all the general policies which make the school an efficient, caring and fair environment for learning. It is the delegated responsibility of the headteacher to manage the space, time, equipment and people on a daily basis and respond to any inappropriate behaviour or dangerous situation as it occurs.

#### The Role of the Parent Governor

Like all other governors, parent governors have three strands to their role:

- Take a strategic role
- Act as a critical friend
- Ensure accountability

What are the good bits about being a parent Governor?

- You have a very privileged and responsible role
- You have the opportunity to make a difference for children now, and in the future
- You have an opportunity to make a difference for parents and to influence the way in which school works with them
- You will learn a lot and develop new skills

How to fulfill your role:

- Attend Governing Body meetings regularly. These are held six times a year, usually at 6pm, and can last up to 1.5 hours.
- Play an active role in sub-committees and decision making
- Learn all you can about the school
- Be approachable to other parents, but make sure you are clear about your role
- Always represent the school positively
- As a governor, you are one of a group and must never act alone
- Always support the decisions of the full Governing Body
- Have your say on decisions in meetings, and vote in the way you wish, but then support the outcomes of the vote, even if you disagree with them
- Always, always observe confidentiality. You will get to know a lot of highly sensitive and confidential information. Do not discuss this with anyone who is not a governor. *A governor can be suspended for serious breaches of confidentiality.*

**Myths and facts explained and common misunderstandings:**

**A. Representative NOT Delegate**

Parent governors are representative parents **rather than** representative **of** parents. A Parent Governor is NOT a delegate. This means you don't have to adopt the opinions of other parents when you vote. You are a representative, which means you listen thoughtfully and can report to fellow Governors vital matters shared by many parents. But when it comes to voting, a representative follows their own conviction of what is right for the school and also heed the views of other governors. *That's the difference between a representative and a delegate.*

The important thing to remember is that once a decision is made, irrespective of whether a parent governor supported it or not, then their loyalty is to the governing body and the school. Sometimes, other parents do not understand that you are not a delegate and not elected to represent them or their personal views. Other parents cannot mandate parent governors on how they should vote or what they should say in governing body meetings.

As a parent governor, you may find situations where you need to act as a Governor first and remind yourself that you are a representative parent and NOT the parents delegate on the Governing Body.

It is **not** the role of the Parent Governor to gauge views of parents and carers in the school playground to be discussed at governing body meetings. A parent Governor must have a context for an agenda item and it isn't efficient to bring in the latest school-gate report.

*If the Governing body agrees that it would like the views of a wider cross section of any stakeholder group, it is for the whole governing body to decide how to do this.*

## **B. The Reality**

What makes the reality of a parent governor a little different is the extra dimension of having your own child(ren) attend that school. Parent Governors should deal with personal issues in the same way as any other parent and not through their role as

governor. Equally, parent governors should not use the meetings as an opportunity to raise any personal issues or issue relating solely to their own child.

### **C. Acting as the Critical Friend**

Often, parent governors who have lots of contact with the school say that this aspect of their role is difficult. Parent Governors must put personal interests aside and participate in governor meetings in the interests of the school as a whole and specifically the interests of the children in the school.

### **D. A Democracy**

No individual governor can make anything happen. The only 'power' belongs to the Governors acting together by majority vote. Sometimes you may care very strongly about an issue but must accept that your view is not supported by the other members of the Governing Body.

### **How to deal with approaches from individuals**

Sometimes parent governors find they are approached by parents with individual concerns. Parents may feel that you should become involved in their own child's issues with the school or a complaint. But it is not appropriate to take the issue to the governing body and they should encourage the parent to take the matter up with the child's class teacher or the Headteacher. The governing body deals with school policies and meetings are not the place to take individual problems. Parent Governors must make it clear that they can't act for the governing body. Sometimes parent governors may have to explain why the Governing body has made a decision a certain way and must be prepared to explain why.