



# Becoming a SCHOOL GOVERNOR



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# 01 Introduction

Are you interested in becoming a school governor? This booklet will tell you more about the role of a governor, the different types of schools that need governors and how to apply.

Every school funded or grant-aided by government is managed by a Board of Governors. School governors play an important role in the management of a school, working alongside the Principal and senior members of staff.

School governors are volunteers from all backgrounds, who use their skills and experience to enable children to have the best possible education. Governors do not need to be educational experts or parents; they are people who can bring a range of qualities to the role such as enthusiasm, commitment and the ability to work in a team.

School governors make an invaluable contribution within their local community whilst meeting new people and learning new skills.

## 02 The Role of the Board of Governors

A school's Board of Governors is normally made up of: parents, teachers, those representing the owners or former owners of the school, people appointed by the Department of Education (DE) and / or the Education Authority (EA).

The Board of Governors is required to operate in accordance with the relevant scheme of management for the school which reflects good management, practices and procedures.

Members will be involved in setting the strategic direction for the school and taking corporate decisions in relation to the statutory functions of the Board of Governors, examples of areas of responsibility include:



Setting the school's vision, aims, plans and policies



Establishing and maintaining the school's ethos



Monitoring and evaluating school performance



Managing school funds economically, effectively and efficiently in line with published guidance



Curriculum planning, including examinations management and administration policy



Employment issues



Pupil pastoral care and protection issues

The responsibility for governing the school is shared by the whole Board of Governors. Governors participate in the decision making for a wide range of proposals and issues, and ultimately vote on and agree important changes which impact the school, pupils and staff.

More information on the roles of Boards of Governors, including their statutory responsibilities can be found in the DE publication, a Guide to Governor Roles and Responsibilities available at <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/landing-pages/governor-guide>

A promotional video on the role of the school governor is available at [Reconstitution and Appointment of Governors | Education Authority Northern Ireland \(eani.org.uk\)](https://www.eani.org.uk)

***“A governor will not incur personal liability in respect of any action taken in good faith in the exercise of the Board’s delegated duties and responsibilities.”***

Department of Education  
The Governor Guide - A Guide to Governor Roles and Responsibilities

# 03 The Role of School Governor

Being a school governor is a challenging though rewarding role which requires continued commitment throughout the term of office. It will provide opportunities to make a real difference both to young people through their education and development, and to the wider local community as a whole. Boards of Governors require a range of knowledge, skills and experience to enable them to challenge school standards and promote improvement.

## During their term of office governors are expected to:

- Attend and participate in Board meetings to consider aspects of school business. The Board of Governors meets as often as its business requires, which could be once a month depending on the size and nature of the school and at a minimum of once per school term.

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- Promote good governance by joining committees which may include staffing, admissions, health and safety, curriculum, discipline or complaints.

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- Prepare for governor meetings by reading documents provided by the Principal or Chairperson.

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- Use their own knowledge, skills and experience combined with the abilities of other Board members to govern, challenge and support the school leadership to promote school improvement in the best interests of pupils.

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- Attend school functions to support and celebrate the successes of pupils and staff.

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- Increase their knowledge about the school and the wider educational system within Northern Ireland through training, to gain a full understanding of procedures and guidelines which have been developed on various school issues, such as child protection and safeguarding.

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- Abide by the Seven Principles of Public Life - see Appendix.

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- Ensure that the requirements of GDPR UK, data protection and confidentiality are adhered to.

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- Consider, declare and manage any conflict of interest either real or perceived, which could question the impartiality of the Board.

## 04 Who can be a School Governor?

A typical Board of Governors should be representative of people from the local community; they do not need to be educational experts but should be supportive of the ethos of the school. The business of the school is progressed by the whole Board of Governors working together as a team in the best interests of the children and young people attending the school.

A governor is appointed in a voluntary unpaid capacity; however, travel expenses incurred may be claimed through the school at which a governor serves.

Applications are welcomed for school governor positions from all sections of the community regardless of background, religious belief, gender, disability, ethnic origin, political opinion, age, marital status, sexual orientation, and whether or not they have dependants.



Applicants must be aged 18 or over, have enthusiasm, commitment and the ability to work in a team.



Applicants should have a desire to ensure children and young people receive the best possible education.



Being a school governor is an opportunity to help others and to develop skills.



Applicants do not need previous experience or qualifications.



Training in the role will be available.

# 05 Who cannot be a School Governor?

**Applicants may not be eligible to be a school governor if they:**



Have been convicted within the previous five years or any time thereafter of any offence with a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of not less than three months without the option of a fine.



Are adjudged bankrupt or under a composition arrangement with creditors or are subject to a Bankruptcy Restrictions Order (BRO).



Already hold three school governor posts (unless there are exceptional circumstances approved by the Department of Education).



Are applying for a post in a school where they are employed.



Are applying for a post in a school and have a financial interest in the supply of goods or services to that school.



Are applying for a post in a school which is registered by law as a company limited by guarantee, and are disqualified by law from being a company director. (NB All grant maintained integrated schools and some voluntary grammar schools are registered as companies limited by guarantee).



Are applying for a post in a school which is registered as a charity and are disqualified under Article 86 of the Charities Act (NI) 2008 from being a trustee of that charity.



In relation to DE governors, are a person who is disqualified from working with children and vulnerable adults under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007 and the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

*Further details are contained within the relevant scheme of management for each school*

# 06 Conflicts of Interest

Anyone offered a school governor appointment must declare any conflicts of interest that might arise. Conflicts of interest are not automatically a barrier to an appointment. However, real, perceived and potential conflicts of interest must be considered to ensure confidence in the independence and impartiality of the Board of Governors and your position as a member.

A conflict of interest could arise if an applicant:



Is a relative of an existing governor or a member of staff of the school;

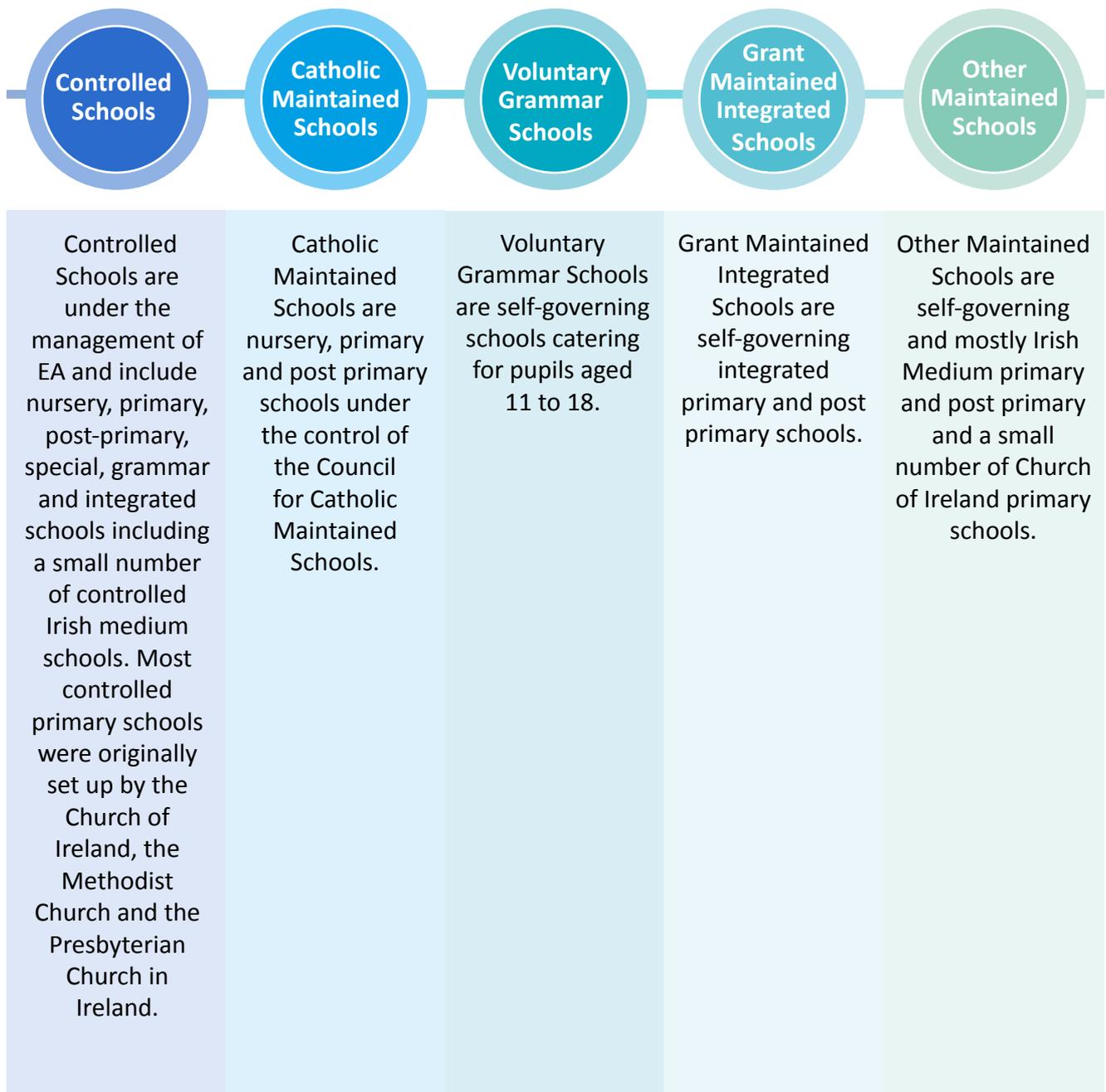


Has a child registered at the school; or



Is a teacher or the Principal of another school in the same community.

# 07 Which Schools need Governors?





## 08 How can I become a School Governor?

To become a DE or an EA governor it is necessary to complete an application.

### **Department of Education**

Apply to become a DE school governor [here](#)

Alternatively email or telephone DE.

School Governance Team:

Email: [govapps@education-ni.gov.uk](mailto:govapps@education-ni.gov.uk)

Telephone: 028 9127 9882 or 028 9127 9927

### **DE selects governors for the Boards of Governors of:**

- controlled nursery, grammar and special schools;
- Catholic maintained schools;
- Irish medium schools;
- other maintained schools;
- voluntary grammar schools; and
- grant maintained integrated schools.

### **Education Authority**

Apply to become an EA school governor [here](#)

Alternatively email or telephone EA.

School Governance Team:

Email: [govsupport@eani.org.uk](mailto:govsupport@eani.org.uk)

Telephone: 028 9041 8069

### **EA selects governors for the Boards of Governors of:**

- controlled schools;
- Catholic maintained schools;
- other maintained schools; and
- a small number of voluntary grammar schools.

## 09 Support

A range of help and advice is available to all governors throughout their term of office from various sources:

- The school Principal
- EA
- CCMS.

A training and support programme for members of Boards of Governors is delivered throughout each year by EA; details are available on the EA website: [Governor Training & Resources | Education Authority Northern Ireland \(eani.org.uk\)](https://www.eani.org.uk/governor-training-resources)

A full and comprehensive reference guide for the roles and responsibilities of school Boards of Governors is available on the DE website: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/landing-pages/governor-guide>



# Appendix

The Seven Principles of Public Life apply to anyone who works as a public office-holder. This includes all those who are elected or appointed to public office, nationally and locally, and all people appointed to work in the civil service, local government, the police, courts and probation services, Non Departmental Public Bodies, and in the health, education, social and care services. All public office-holders are both servants of the public and stewards of public resources. The Principles also have application to all those in other sectors delivering public services.

- **Selflessness** - Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

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- **Integrity** - Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

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- **Objectivity** - Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

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- **Accountability** - Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

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- **Openness** - Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

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- **Honesty** - Holders of public office should be truthful.

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- **Leadership** - Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

