

Recruiting a new foundation governor - Support for Parochial Church Councils (PCCs)



The challenges for PCCs

Finding a suitable, willing and able person to serve as a foundation governor is no easy task for a PCC. There may be a number of reasons for this including:

- 1) **The PCC is not informed of the school's needs in terms of what skill set or experience is required from a new governor.**
- 2) **The PCC often have a limited field in which they can search for a suitable and willing person.**
- 3) **Having approached a person who potentially could fulfil the role, the PCC may find the person is either daunted by the responsibilities of the position or the 'unknowns' of what is required of them.**
- 4) **The application process itself may put people off.**

How can the PCC overcome these challenges and create greater opportunities for attracting new foundation governors?

- 1) **It is important that the church school and the PCC get to know each other and develop a positive relationship. These are some ways in which the PCC and school may relate with each other:**
 - a) Identify a named person from both the school and PCC who will be the point of contact. E.g. vicar or PCC secretary, Headteacher or the Chair of Governors.
 - b) The named points of contact meet informally to discuss their contexts.
 - c) Identify key dates when the PCC and school could come together e.g. church or school events.
 - d) Exchange newsletters.
 - e) The Head/Chair presents school updates to the PCC on an annual basis.
 - f) The PCC rep presents updates to the Governing Body or a committee.
 - g) School leaders invite PCC members to an Open Day / tour of the school.
 - h) Find a community / parish project that the school and PCC could work together on.
 - i) When a governor vacancy arises, the clerk or Diocesan Governance officer informs the PCC of the skill sets ideally required.

- 2) **As some PCCs have a limited field in which to find a suitable governor, it may be necessary for the PCC to widen their net. The PCC will need to determine if this is necessary and if so these are some actions the PCC could take:**
 - a) Inform the LDBE Governance Officer that they need support to find a new foundation governor.
 - b) The LDBE governance officer will then deploy a range of strategies to help in the search. For example, contact existing foundation governors in nearby schools to see if they would be willing to serve in more than one school. The LDBE would also register the vacancy with organisations who have contacts for potential governors.
 - c) The PCC may request to advertise the vacancy on appropriate websites such as the school / church / diocesan websites.
 - d) The vicar/PCC secretary may approach known contacts in neighbouring parishes who may be willing to serve as a governor. To become a foundation governor, it is not necessary to live in the parish in which the school is located.

- e) The PCC may consider taking the vacancy to deanery synod.
- f) The PCC may consider approaching other denominations in the community.
- g) It is not essential for the PCC to have personal knowledge of the applicant. The PCC will however want to consider the application and references to see if the applicant has the skill set and ability to support and develop the school's Christian character. The LDBE will always consult with the PCC and seek their nomination for a foundation governor.

3) How can the PCC encourage suitable people to apply for the role of the governor?

Having found someone who potentially would make a good foundation governor, it is sometimes the case that the individual is reluctant to apply. This is sometimes because they are either daunted by the responsibility or they are not really clear on what the role entails. To develop the potential governor's confidence to apply, the PCC may deploy the following actions:

- a) Arrange for the potential applicant to meet with the chair of governors / vicar / Headteacher to find out more about the role and responsibilities.
- b) Provide them with an information pack about the role (available from the diocesan website)
- c) Arrange for the applicant to have a tour of the school.
- d) Arrange for the applicant to shadow a foundation governor in role.
- e) Enable them to observe a governor meeting.
- f) Provide support for the candidate to complete the application.
- g) Ensure they are aware of the induction pack and training opportunities available to them when they become a governor.

4) Progressing with the application process sometimes puts people off. The PCC may help applicants in the following ways:

- a) Contact the diocesan governance officer for an application form and guidance as soon as possible.
- b) Offer support to help the candidate fill in the form and identify suitable references. It is important they clearly state relevant skill sets and their links with the church community. It is important that referees are well placed to provide an objective reference – avoiding friends and neighbours. Someone from the school and church who knows them well would be the ideal.
- c) Monitor the pace of completing the application and provide timely nominations to the DBE. If there are delays at any stage of the application process, there is a greater opportunity for the applicant to withdraw the application.
- d) Provide feedback to the diocesan governance officer about the process e.g. the ease in which the forms can be completed etc. The DBE wants to make the process as simple as possible whilst maintaining the rigour required.

Paper written by Paul Thompson

Diocesan Deputy Director of Education

17 December 2020