

## **Being a Staff Governor**

Staff governors are in a unique position on a governing body. By definition, staff governors are involved in the day-to-day running of the school, and yet are asked, as governors, to put this to one side and participate in the governing body's work as "strategic managers". This is not always easy to do. However, the role of the staff governor offers an opportunity to make a real contribution to the strategic management of the school, providing an interesting and rewarding dimension to work.

It is important for staff governors to establish a rapport with the body that elected them (the school staff), whilst continuing to maintain a strategic approach to school governance. Although being available to advise staff on appropriate routes of action is an aspect of the role, it is vital that staff governors do not personally become involved in individual concerns. Apart from the possibility of this jeopardising appropriate complaint, grievance and appeal procedures, no governor has the authority to act individually on behalf of the school.

### **Staff governors are**

- ✓ representative members of staff rather than representatives of the staff;
- ✓ in a position to bring a staff viewpoint and perspective to discussion and debate;
- ✓ individuals who act according to their own conscience: how they vote on any decision is up to them;
- ✓ equal in status to all other governors;
- ✓ expected to follow the rules of governor protocol and confidentiality

### **Staff governors are not**

- ✗ expected to gather the views of other staff and take them to the governing body;
- ✗ a go-between or staff delegate, and nor should they act as one;
- ✗ expected to vote as instructed by other members of staff or professional bodies

### **To fulfil the role effectively, staff governors**

- have equal rights with all other governors;
- should not participate in discussions where they have a personal interest in the outcome;
- should not participate in discussions about colleagues' performance or pay;
- should feel free to express their own personal views; it being recognised that this is not necessarily the view of the majority of staff;
- do not have a mandate to express any views other than their own. However, they should report in good faith on widely held staff views, even if they decide to vote differently;
- participate in governor training, particularly new governor training;
- are aware of the sensitivity of governing body meeting discussions and maintain confidentiality;
- comply with the governing body's code of conduct at all times

### **Achieving the balance between being an impartial staff governor and having regular involvement in day-to-day issues can sometimes be very difficult. Some practical ways to achieve this balance include**

- never pressing your own personal agenda at the expense of others;
- always being clear about what information can be reported back to colleagues;
- never promising to solve a problem on your own;
- being wary of bringing an individual issue or grievance to meetings without following agreed procedures;
- abiding by the agreed protocol regarding agenda items, including Necessary Urgent Business;
- keeping yourself aware of staff views and concerns;
- signposting members of staff who raise concerns to the appropriate course of action rather than getting involved in finding a solution;
- playing an active part in governor meetings;
- sharing in the wider governor workload

### **Conflicts of interest**

Staff governors may participate in decisions relating to personnel issues, such as staffing structures and appointments, although not in any matter relating to their colleagues' pay or performance. In some circumstances, the staff governor's participation will not be appropriate, and this should be explained, in outline, to them before the meeting by the headteacher or chair of governors. Staff governors may choose to absent themselves from any personnel discussions.

All governors are required to declare whether they have a pecuniary interest, either direct or indirect, in any matter discussed by the governing body. Ongoing interests are declared annually. It is usual to declare specific interests in any items to be discussed at the start of a meeting. The staff governor may be required to withdraw from the meeting for the duration of discussion on the matter in question and take no part in any vote on the subject.

A staff governor will not be deemed to have an interest as long as it is no greater than the general interest of any, or all, of the school's staff. However, he/she may have to withdraw from a discussion if he/she stands to gain personally from the outcome of a decision, eg a promotion, or if he/she has been personally involved in a particular issue being considered, eg relating to a specific pupil or parent. However, it is unusual for such matters to be discussed by the governing body.

A staff governor may not be the Chair or Vice-Chair of the governing body.

### **Relationship with the Headteacher**

There may be rare occasions when there is a conflict of interest between the role of the member of staff as an employee and as a governor. This is particularly sensitive where there is a difference of view between the staff governor and the headteacher, who acts as a professional adviser to the governing body. Where an issue arises that may be an area of conflict, the staff governor is advised to discuss it with the headteacher before the governors' meeting so that he/she knows that you may be presenting an alternative point of view at the meeting. As a matter of courtesy, controversial school issues should not be raised without prior discussion with the headteacher. In the same vein, a headteacher, as far as possible, should try not to introduce something of a controversial nature into a meeting without some degree of forewarning to the staff governor.

### **And finally**

Although being a staff governor involves achieving a delicate balance of roles, effective staff governors will find working alongside the other members of the governing body both interesting and rewarding, and their effort will contribute to ensuring that the governing body fulfils its duties to all the children in the school.