Being a Parent Governor

Parent 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 briefing paper is to offer advice to new/prospective Parent Governors on their specific role and suggest ways of handling some of the tricky situations which may arise.

Parent governors are:

- Well placed to understand parents' views and to remind the Governing Body how matters being discussed affect parents.
- Individuals! How you vote on any decision is up to you.
- In a good position to help the governing body to communicate effectively with parents.

Parent governors are not:

- Expected to gather the views of other parents and take them to the Governing Body.
- Simply expected to represent the interests of parents, or themselves.
- A link between parents and the Governing Body.
- Expected to vote as instructed by other parents.

All Governors undertake their duties in a professional manner, maintaining confidentiality and working to the BDAT Code of Conduct.

What are the benefits of being a Parent Governor?

- You have a very privileged and responsible role.
- You have the opportunity to make a difference for other parents, and to influence the way in which school works with them.
- You have the opportunity to make a difference, not only for your children, but for children in years to come.
- You will learn a lot and develop new skills.

What is expected of the Parent Governor when fulfilling their role?

- Attend Governing Body meetings regularly and play an active role in decision-making.
- Learn all you can about the school.
- Consider how the Governing Body communicate with parents? Could you help them to improve links?
- How accessible is the school – how easy is it for parents to go into school to discuss things with the Head teacher or teachers? Could you give feedback to help the school to be more open and welcoming?
- How accessible are the Governors – do parents ever get the opportunity to meet with Governors; do they know how to get in touch with the Chair of Governors if they need to? Could you encourage the Governing Body to be more visible?

- Learn how the school handles complaints and read the BDAT Complaints policy. If another parent approaches you with a complaint, advise them to speak to the Head teacher.
- 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 votes – even if you disagree with them.
- Always, always, always observe confidentiality. You will get to know a lot of highly sensitive and confidential information – don't discuss it with anyone who is not a Governor. A Governor can be suspended for serious breaches of confidentiality.

What is the time commitment for Governor Meetings?

Most Governing Bodies hold a full LGB meeting 6 times per academic year. All Governors attend these meetings. Some LGBs delegate their functions to sub committees who may deal with educational standards or finance. Governors will have reports and other support papers to read in advance of these meetings. There may also be additional meetings such as Recruitment Panels, Complaints Panels, HR meetings and Pupil Disciplinary Committees.

What should you do if a parent raises a complaint with you?

From time to time you may be approached by other parents who would like to make a complaint about something the school is or isn't doing.

- Refer to the school or BDAT policies and advise the parent to speak to the Headteacher.

What to do if you experience a conflict between being a parent and being a Governor?

This can happen – especially if you think the Governing Body is making decisions which you feel will adversely affect your child(ren).

- If you have any concerns, talk to the Head teacher or to the Chair of Governors outside of the Governing Body meeting.

Where will you get help, advice and support from?

- Other Governors.
- The LGB Governance Professional or the BDAT Governance Team.
- The Chair of Governors and the Head Teacher.
- A Governor mentor or "buddy".
- By attending the induction training, and other training, as guided by the LGB Governance Professional.

If you are interested, please contact the Headteacher or email: governance@bdat-academies.org