

# The ROLE OF A PARENT GOVERNOR at McAuley



The  
McAULEY  
Catholic High School  
and Sixth Form  
DONCASTER

Dear Parent(s) / Carer(s),

The Governing Board of The McAuley Catholic High School has **one vacancy** for Parent Governor, whose child/children is/are registered pupil(s) at the school and are willing to offer the following:

- i. an understanding and promotion of the Catholic School's Aims and Identity
  - ii. time to prepare for and attend governors' meetings and other school events
  - iii. a concern for the whole school and its role in the parish and local community
  - iv. willingness to learn about developments in education from the Headteacher and staff and by attending training for governors
  - v. an understanding of the governing body's relationship with the Headteacher
  - vi. willingness to be a good team member working harmoniously with fellow governors and school staff
  - vii. an ability to maintain confidentiality in many areas of governors' work
- Parent Governors are elected for a four-year term and any expertise they can bring to our governing body will be appreciated.

The Governing Board and the Diocese of Hallam are keen to recruit from all ethnic backgrounds represented in the school community. Although elected by the parent body, the parent governor is not mandated to represent their views at meetings and should be alert to the importance of advising parents to contact the Headteacher directly in those issues for which he/she has professional responsibility. Being a parent governor at your child's school comes with a lot of responsibility, but for the right kind of parent, the rewards of seeing the school and the students flourish make it all worthwhile.

We hope that you may be interested in putting yourself forward. We would particularly welcome parents with experience in finance or human resources or with a legal background. The person specification will give you a clear idea of the person we are looking for.

## *What is a parent governor?*

Parent governors are a core part of a school's Board of Governors. The role is voluntary and unpaid. The outcome is indirect, since the governor role has little interaction with the pupils or with daily school life, but is much more "behind the scenes". As well as parent governors, a school's Board of Governors may consist of:

- Staff governors
- Local authority governors
- Foundation governors
- Partnership governors
- Co-opted governors
- Associate members

## *What do parent governors do?*

Parent governors bring their wealth of experience and knowledge, contributing to the successful running of their child's school. Being a governor is a "hands off" role – decisions made by the board influence the whole school, but governors are not responsible for, or involved in, the day-to-day running of the school. The role is a necessary part of ensuring the good functioning of school leadership. Governors set the ethos of the school and drive for continuous improvement, and they also oversee financial performance and ensure money is well-spent. Governors commission the head teacher and other school leaders to act on their behalf in putting their ideas into practice, and they ensure that the school leadership is held to account in doing so.

## *What responsibility and influence do parent governors have?*

Quite a lot. It is the Board of Governors' role to:

- Appoint the head teacher.
- Appoint the deputy head teacher.
- Hold the school leadership to account.
- Ensure school staff have training, support and resources to be effective.
- Maintain oversight of the school's budget spending, including pupil premium allocation.
- Decide on the aims, strategy, vision and maintain the Catholic ethos of the school.
- Determine ways to put all of the above into practice as part of the school development plan.
- Hear the later stages of staff grievances or pupil exclusion appeals.

As you can see, school governors have both a creative and managerial remit. They develop ideas and strategies for putting those ideas in to practice, but also hold leaders to account and offer them constructive feedback on their performance.

Responsibility does not rest with any one individual. Decisions are made by the board as a whole, and individual governors are not held to account for collective decisions.

## *How big a commitment is being a parent governor?*

The term of office is usually four years and it may extend beyond their child's time at the school if their child graduates or changes school during the four-year period. During this time, you would be expected to attend and contribute thoughts and ideas to the governing board's meetings.

The full Governing Board meets once a term, as do the sub-committees for: Catholic Life and Ethos, Standards and Finance and Resources. There are ad hoc committees for Admissions, Pay and Personnel and Headteacher Appraisal. Governors are asked to serve on a minimum of one sub-committee. All the meetings take place on a weekday evening. Training is made available online through Educare, but also the Local Authority and, on occasions, whole governor training takes place on site.

You will also be invited to school events such as Masses, Liturgies, INSET events. Under current employment law, employers must allow employees to undertake their duties at

school, but this may be paid or unpaid, so speak to your employer and find out what their policy is.

You may resign at any time by giving written notice to the clerk on your board of governors.

### *What skills do parent governors need?*

There is no set skillset that marks out an ideal parent governor. So long as you are over 18 years of age and have a child at the school you can express an interest in becoming a parent governor for the school. It falls to the judgement of the board that any parent wishing to act as a governor has the relevant skills and experience to govern effectively and contribute to the success of the school. Prospective candidates should look carefully at the following job specification to see how well they match up with it. There is also a legal requirement for parents to be DBS checked before starting their post as a governor.

## Person Specification for Parent Governor at McAuley

	Essential Criteria	Desirable Criteria
<b>Key Skills &amp; Abilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analytical skills and the ability to understand and question written and numerical information;</li> <li>The ability to establish good working relationships with Governors, Parents and Staff at all levels within the school</li> </ul>	<p>Any of the following skills will also add value;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marketing</li> <li>Strategic Planning</li> <li>Communications</li> <li>Project Management</li> <li>Decision Making</li> <li>Problem Solving</li> <li>Finance</li> <li>HR</li> <li>Legal Knowledge</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An understanding of the role of School Governors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An understanding of how schools performance is measured</li> <li>An understanding of schools finance</li> <li>An understanding of the key issues and priorities</li> <li>An understanding of the key issues and priorities facing schools.</li> </ul>
<b>Experience</b>		<p>At least one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business planning and monitoring of progress against targets</li> <li>Effective performance management of staff</li> <li>Budget analysis in order to understand the costs associated with particular services, projects and programmes.</li> <li>Analysing complex performance data and information and forming recommendations for action;</li> <li>Health and Safety management</li> <li>Premises management</li> <li>Understanding or experience of publicity and marketing</li> </ul>
<b>Personal Attributes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An interest in the education of children</li> <li>An enquiring mind and desire to understand how the school is impacting the performance of pupils</li> <li>Self motivated and dependable</li> <li>Effective team worker, able to share ideas and make best use of resources;</li> <li>Able to understand and interpret sensitive information and apply appropriate levels of confidentiality</li> </ul>	
<b>Other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A commitment to the demands of the role</li> <li>A commitment to developing skills and knowledge through training and taking up briefings and networking opportunities</li> </ul>	

## *What about conflicts of interest?*

Objectivity is essential to the role. Parent governors must promote the best interests of all children at the school, and have a duty to maintain good relations with and be available to the other parents. Parent governors should not use committee meetings to raise issues affecting their own child at the expense of others. They can withdraw from meetings where they are concerned that they could not be impartial, or would stand to gain by the outcome of a resolution.

It is not possible to stand as a parent governor if you are an elected member of your Local Authority (LA) or if you are employed by the school.

## The role: in summary

- The role and responsibilities of parent governors are **no different** from those of other governors
- Parent governors are not delegates and do not speak 'on behalf' of the parent body, but bring a parental perspective to the issues discussed
- The main difference is that parents are elected to the board, not appointed (unless there are fewer candidates than vacancies)

To see the full list of the responsibilities and duties that parent governors are expected to do, take a look at our [governor and trustee role descriptions](#).

## Communicate the parents' viewpoint

Although you're not there to speak on behalf of parents, you can use your status as a parent to help the board understand parents' views and remind everyone to factor the parent community into discussions.

Understanding parents' opinion helps the board to make good decisions and helps guarantee that there is a link between governance and the parent community. You can read more about this in the [Governance Handbook](#) (pages 16-17).

Bring your valuable knowledge and perspective to discussions. For example:

- **Do** ask the headteacher "have parents been consulted on this issue? If not, why not?" or "what impact will this have on parents?"
- **Don't** say "as a parent, I've spoken to other parents in the playground and we all think the school should do X"

## Set expectations with other parents

You need to help other parents understand that you're not there to speak on their behalf, bring up their individual issues in meetings or solve problems for them.

Be polite but firm, and tell them to stick to the official channels.

For example, if another parent approaches you at the school gate with a grievance:

- **Do** get up to speed with your school's complaints procedure, as well as the staff list, so you can quickly tell them how and where to raise their issue
- **Do** ask parents to put it in writing and follow the school's complaints procedure. This helps to separate genuine complaints from the customary grumbles
- **Do** explain what the role of parent governor actually is. Learn a one-liner such as "parent governors don't speak 'on behalf' of the parent body, instead we bring a parental perspective to the strategic decisions the governors make"
- **Don't** agree to raise it at the meeting or look into it for them - this will set a bad precedent and will cause problems later down the line as the right procedure hasn't been followed

You might also see comments about the school from parents on social media, perhaps in parent groups you've joined. It's not your role to get involved. Read our [Facebook 'cheat sheet' for governors](#) for advice on how to respond in these situations.

## Separate your role as a governor from your role as a parent

Think about all pupils, not just your child. As a governor, you're responsible for the progress and wellbeing of **all** of the pupils at the school, so keep this at the forefront of your mind in meetings.

It may feel helpful to view issues through the lens of your own child, but as a governor, you must rely on a wide range of sources to make decisions and hold the headteacher to account. These include high-quality, objective data and the views of many stakeholders including pupils, staff, parents and the community.

When discussing issues in meetings:

- **Do** remember that you're acting in the interests of the whole pupil body
- **Don't** bring up your child, or refer to anecdotal evidence based only on your child's, or a friend's, experience

Follow the complaints procedure. If you have a complaint concerning your child, follow the school's complaints procedure as any other parent would. If possible, ask the other parent to lead the discussion with the school. In all communication during the process, clarify that you're acting as a parent not a governor.

You could take action as a governor if the complaint affects more children than your own child - for example, if the data shows a wider problem with pupil progress in your child's year group, ask questions in the relevant meetings like:

- What support is in place for underperforming members of staff?

- How does the school help all children who are falling behind?

#### Avoid conflicts of interest

Most of the time, you won't need to declare a personal interest in all agenda items that could have an impact on your child. You should do this where:

- The matter would affect your child individually (an exclusions panel where your child was the victim of a behaviour incident, for example)
- You feel too close to the matter to be impartial

Where there is a dispute about whether you should withdraw, the other governors may make this decision. Read more guidance on conflicts of interest [here](#).

If you have concerns over a governing board decision

Again, remember to keep the roles separate.

If you have a concern:

- **Do** raise it in a governing board meeting. Meetings are designed for this purpose; governors can openly discuss decisions the governing board might take, and governors can express disagreement by voting against it
- **Do** respect the decision taken by the board if it's been voted on properly, and be united with your fellow governors
- **Do** ask for a meeting with the chair to discuss a decision in more detail if you wish
- **Don't** express your disagreement outside governing board meetings
- **Don't** involve other parents or seek to mobilise them in any way

If you wish to nominate yourself or wish to nominate another parent, please complete and sign the enclosed Nomination Form. In addition, all nominees are invited to produce a short summary (250 words approximately) stating their reason(s) for wishing to be a Parent Governor and what they could bring to the Governing Body.

I would like to advise you that the School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012 state that in certain circumstances a person may not hold office as a governor of a school. Please find enclosed the Qualifications and Disqualifications Criteria. Further information about the Role of the Elected Parent Governor and the Qualifications and Disqualifications Criteria can be found in the 'Vacancies' section of the school's website. Please read this information before nominating yourself or accepting a nomination.

Disclosure and Barring Information The Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) merged with the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) in December 2012 to form the Disclosure and



Barring Service (DBS). The 'CRB' certificate has now been replaced by a 'DBS' certificate. School governors do not need to be routinely DBS checked but all new governors will be required to complete a Declaration Form and be subject to an Enhanced DBS check. The List is maintained by the Disclosure and Barring Service (formerly the Independent Safeguarding Authority) of individuals who are barred from working with children. It is a sensitive and confidential document and access to it is strictly limited to the individuals responsible for checking the suitability of applicants, including volunteers, working in a school environment. Governors can only take up their duties upon the completion of the Enhanced DBS check. Please be advised that if there are more nominations than vacancies available, there will be an election.

Please return the Nomination Form and Short Summary in a closed envelope to: Kate Leggott, Business Support Manager, The McAuley Catholic High School, Acacia Road , Doncaster Or Email to: [kleggott@mcauley.org.uk](mailto:kleggott@mcauley.org.uk)

Timescale

The deadline is 12 noon **Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2022.**