

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A GOVERNOR By Jessica Fergusson

Governors represent the largest group of voluntary workers in the country but what exactly do they do?

The governing body exists to promote the interests of the school and its pupils. Every governing body will make different arrangements and decisions depending on the needs of their individual school. However, governors need to have an effective working relationship with the headteacher and have three main roles within the school community:

To provide a strategic view

Governors help to decide the ways to improve the school so that pupils learn effectively and achieve the highest possible standards. For example, at St Columb Minor there are two governors who are involved in setting performance targets for our pupils. Other governors are involved in financial planning or curriculum issues.

To act as a critical friend

Governors also have a supportive role and through their expertise and knowledge take responsibility for monitoring the school's effectiveness by asking questions and seeking to make improvements.

To ensure accountability

The governing body is responsible for ensuring quality education and has a duty to discuss and question proposals that affect this. It provides information to parents via the school profile (available online) and the school prospectus.

From this you can see that governors get involved in all aspects of life at our school!

Although the workload is broad, St Columb Minor School has a team of eighteen governors and the work is shared out between them. Meetings of the full governing body are held twice a term, usually at the end of the school day and they last about two hours. Some of this time is given over to training and recent sessions have covered topics such as child protection, safer recruitment and the SEF (self evaluation form).

There are then several committees and individual governors will be a member of one of these. At St Columb Minor we have a Teaching and Learning Committee, a Staffing and Environment Committee and a Finance Committee. The Teaching and Learning and Staffing and Environment Committees meet once per term although the Finance Committee meets more frequently due to the nature of its work

Governors are expected to attend all their meetings and need to prepare carefully beforehand.

Governors also have individual responsibilities covering topics such as special needs, child protection, mentoring new governors as well as all the different subjects taught at our school. There is a planned programme for monitoring and evaluating all subject areas and governors work closely with the teacher who is the relevant subject leader.

Governors do need to make time to become familiar with the school by visiting and talking to the headteacher and other staff, reading relevant papers and taking part in school events. Governors are often present at our Learning Together sessions, Messy Play sessions and enjoy getting involved with school initiatives such as Book Week. There are wonderful opportunities to celebrate the talents and successes of our young people by attending plays, carol services and the Annual Leaver's service. As a governor at St Columb Minor you are always welcome at school!

Some of this may sound a bit daunting but governorship is a wonderful way to help your community and develop your own skills and interests at the same time. There are many opportunities for training both at County training sessions and also at training events held at school. Governors are invited to join some of the INSET days at school and these are a particularly valuable way to get to know everyone and learn more about our school. Governors are sent newsletters from the National Governor's Association and have access to information and guidance via the internet.

THE GOVERNORS AT ST COLUMB MINOR WORK TOGETHER AS A TEAM TO HELP OUR SCHOOL TO IMPROVE BY LOOKING, LISTENING AND ASKING QUESTIONS.