

Appointing Parent Governor Representatives to Education Scrutiny Committee

1. Introduction

The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 provides for regulations requiring the election of representatives of parent governors at maintained schools to specified committees. These are committees which a local authority appoints to carry out its statutory education functions as a local education authority. The intention is to enable parents to have a direct input to their local authority's policies on education provision for pupils of school age.

The regulations came into effect on 1 September 1999.

Staffordshire County Council wants to enable parents to have a direct input into local authority policies on education. It has therefore been decided to appoint **three parent governor representatives** to its Education (Scrutiny) Committee, which is the major policy-making body in the county. The full terms of reference for the committee are set out in Appendix 2.

2. Role of the Parent Governor Representative

Right to Speak

- A parent governor representative may participate in any discussion that takes place, whether or not the representative has voting rights on the topic under discussion.

Right to Vote

- The parent governor representatives will have the right to vote on any decisions taken by the committee which relate to:
 - schools maintained by the local authority;
 - pupils who attend schools maintained by the local authority, or who are educated by the local authority in some other way.
- Parent governor representatives will be allowed to vote on matters which affect how funds which have already been earmarked for education are to be spent, such as votes on:
 - how much of the education budget is devoted to schools (compared to other forms of education provision such as adult education or the youth service);
 - what proportion of the school budget is retained centrally by the local education authority to provide services for schools and pupils, and what proportion is delegated to individual school budgets;
 - what proportion of the schools budget retained centrally is devoted to each of the four main funding areas (school improvement, pupil access, special educational provision and strategic management) and how much is contributed to Government grants for other specific activities;
 - the formula by which individual school budgets are calculated;
 - any other more specific financial matters.

- Parent governor representatives **should not** vote on:
 - any decision which determines the Local Education Authority's total education revenue or capital budget;
 - any matter which would require the council to raise the council tax;
 - any matter in which the representative has a pecuniary interest or any matter in which the representative has some other direct interest, including a direct impact on the school at which the representative is or was a parent governor or where the representative's children are taught (for example, whether that school or another school should be given priority for the replacement of temporary classrooms).

3. Eligibility to participate in the Election Process

- **Who can stand for election?**

To be eligible to stand, a parent governor will need to be - **at the time of the election** - a parent of a child at one of the Local Education Authority's schools or a parent or a child who is educated by the Local Education Authority in some other way. The child does not have to be at the same school at which the candidate is a parent governor. For example, a candidate whose child has moved to a secondary school in the authority, could still be a parent governor at the primary school. Although not ideal, it does not matter if the person standing only has a very short amount of their term of office as a parent governor left, or if all of their children will have left school very soon after they are elected. **The key point is that they should be both a parent governor and a parent on the date of their election.**

- **Who can't stand for election?**

The following persons are not eligible to stand as parent governor representatives:

- employees of the local authority;
- employees of schools maintained by the local authority (including teachers, non-teaching and other staff;
- councillors of the same local authority.

- **Who can vote in the elections?**

All parent governors at schools maintained by the authority at the date of the election are eligible to vote in the elections. This includes those parent governors who are not eligible to stand for election as outlined above.

4. The Nomination Process

Candidates should have a proposer and seconder, who themselves are - **at the date of the election** - a parent of a child at one of the Local Education Authority's schools or a parent of a child who is educated by the Local Education Authority in some other way. The nomination form should then be signed by all three. Candidates returning nomination forms are advised to submit a brief statement about themselves.

In preparing the statement it is suggested that you should try to cover, at the very least:

- why you want to be a parent governor representative;
- how you think your experience and abilities will help you in the role;
- what you can offer parent governors and pupils if you are elected.

You will also need to bear in mind that the role of parent governor representative is a non-political one. For example, you should not make any references to your politics or those of any other candidates.

5. Election Process

The timetable to be followed for the commencement and completion of the election process is shown in Appendix 1. **The ballot will be a secret ballot.**

The governor database at the education office will identify all parent governors eligible to participate and the following procedures will be followed:

- Seeking nominations - a letter, nomination form and guidance booklet will be sent to all parent governors. Completed nomination forms must be returned to the address shown before the stipulated date.
- Conducting the ballot - following the closing date for receipt of nomination forms a ballot paper, list of candidates and accompanying statements, will be sent to all parent governors. Parent Governors will be asked to vote for three representatives. Completed ballot papers should again be returned to the address shown before the stipulated date. A stamped addressed envelope will be provided for this purpose. When considering the nominations parent governors will be asked to bear in mind a desire for those elected to be as representative as possible of the geographical areas of the county and the different categories of schools.
- Counting the votes - the three parent governors obtaining the most votes will be duly appointed to the Education (Scrutiny) Committee. All candidates will be given the opportunity to be present when the count takes place although inability to attend will not invalidate the count taking place on the agreed date.
- Announcing the result - successful and unsuccessful candidates will be informed immediately of the results. Full details will be given in the spring term edition of the Governors' Newsletter.

6. Term of Office

- Parent governor representatives will be appointed for a term of four years.
- A parent governor representative can resign at any time and the LEA will arrange to appoint his/her successor who will themselves be appointed for a term of four years.

7. When a Parent Governor must stand down

- Parent governors who have completed their term of office as a school governor can continue as parent governor representative.
- However, a parent governor representative must stand down from office if she/he:

- resigns as a parent governor;
- is disqualified from being a parent governor;
- is elected as a member of the local authority;
- becomes employed by the local authority or by a school maintained by the local authority.

8. Induction and Support

- Parent governor representatives can expect, shortly after their election, to receive the essential information to help them get started in their new role. Officers of the Local Education Authority will provide induction and support and will also be able to offer guidance, support and training in relation to any background information or skills you feel you need in order to carry out, effectively, your role as a local authority committee member.
- The Department for Education and Skills has provided the local education authority with a small grant which should be sufficient to meet any reasonable expenses that you incur in carrying out your responsibilities. You will be given guidance on how to make a claim and the different claims you may make, which may include:
 - copying, printing, telephone charges, stationery, postage;
 - travel and subsistence;
 - child care.

9. Keeping in touch with parents

- As a parent governor representative on the Education (Scrutiny) Committee, your role is to represent the views, not just of parent governors or governors, but of all parents across the authority.
- You will probably want to do as much as possible to ensure that parental concerns or wishes are raised at the right time. Parents are also likely to want some feedback on how you have been able to represent their interests and whether the eventual decision altered as a result.
- Officers of the local education authority will help you undertake this task which initially may be to make use of the weekly mail bag to schools and the termly news and information service to all governors. In time, the DfES hopes to be able to give guidance on examples of approaches made by parent governor representatives that have worked well. The first group of parent governor representatives will be breaking new ground, so you will be encouraged to share ideas and experiences with each other.

10. The Returning Officer

- The Director of Education will act as 'returning officer' and will ensure that the elections are fair and run in accordance with agreed procedures.
- Any questions or concerns regarding the election process should be referred to: Steve Berisford, Governor Support Services (Telephone: (01785) 278802).

Appendix

Education Scrutiny Committee

The terms of reference for the committee are:

- a) The Council's functions and powers as Local Education Authority relating to:
 - the provision of statutory education (under the Education Act 1944 and any subsequent enactments);
 - the employment of children and their restriction in taking part in entertainment;
 - the provision of recreational/sports and physical training facilities;
 - the development and improvement of knowledge and practice of arts and crafts;
 - the granting of permits for smaller passenger vehicles used for education purposes
 - the powers of the County Council under Section 39 of the Staffordshire Act 1983 (byelaws at leisure centres);
 - dealing with the Council's functions and powers in respect of non-statutory and continuing education and training.
- b) The Education Framework proposed in support of the County Council's Policy Plan.
- c) Any major policy issues affecting the County as Local Education Authority.
- d) All major financial approvals, including the Education revenue and capital budgets.
- e) All matters pertaining to the achievement of Best Value within Education including:
 - strategy;
 - review;
 - performance plan;
 - performance indicators and standards;
 - service delivery (by internal and external means);
 - annual business plans and reports of business units;
 - monitoring of business units' performance against objectives and targets;
 - proposals for the use of reserves, surpluses and deficits;
 - internal and external audit performance and reports.
- f) All the Council's functions and powers as Local Education Authority pursuant to the Crime and Disorder legislation.
- g) To require the Education Service Leader or officers to report from time to time as may be required.