

The Role of the Parent Governor

Parent governors play a vital role on governing bodies, holding the unique position of having a parental viewpoint of the school. Through the children, they have a first-hand experience of the delivery of the curriculum, and how the school is perceived from the 'consumers' point of view. This enables parent governors to bring a different perspective to the strategic management of the school.

It is important for parent governors to establish a rapport with the parental body which elected them, while continuing to manage a strategic approach to school governance. Although being available to advise parents on appropriate routes of action is a very important aspect of the role, it is vital that parent governors do not personally become involved in individual concerns. Apart from the possibility of this jeopardising appropriate complaints and appeals procedures, no governor has the authority to act individually on behalf of the school.

Parent governors are representative parents rather than representatives of parents.

To fulfil the role effectively, parent governors should:

- make themselves known to the parent body;
- attend in-service training sessions;
- listen impartially to concerns raised by parents;
- guide parents regarding appropriate lines of action and procedures;
- present a balanced view of issues, representing different sections of the community.

Achieving a balance between being the impartial representative parent and the often emotional issues relating to individual children's education can sometimes be very difficult. Some practical ways to achieve this balance include:

- make yourself available to parents;
- never press your own child's case at the expense of others;
- never promise to 'solve a problem' on your own;
- be wary of bringing an individual's issue to meetings without following the agreed procedures;
- abide by the agreed protocol regarding agenda items and Any Other Business;
- keep yourself aware of parental views and concerns;
- play an active part in governor meetings.

Although this is a very delicate role, there is ample support and training available. Effective parent governors will find that working alongside the other members of the governing body both interesting and rewarding, in that their efforts will ensure that the work of the governing body fulfils its duties to all children.