

Role of the Parent Governor

The Role of Parent Governor

As a parent governor, your role is:

- To bring a **parental perspective** to the issues discussed – you're not there to speak 'on behalf' of the parent body
- No different from those of other governors

Note: parents are elected to the board, not appointed (unless there are fewer candidates than vacancies).

Communicate a parent's perspective

It's a fine line to tread but remember that you're not there to speak on behalf of parents.

Use your perspective as a parent to help the board understand a parent's viewpoint. This will help the board make good decisions and maintain a link between governance and the parent community.

You can read more about this in the [Governance Handbook](#) (pages 16 to 17 - below).

2.4 Parental engagement and community leadership

14. *As the strategic leaders of their organisations it is vital that boards are connected with, and answerable to, the communities they serve, particularly parents/carers.*
15. *Parental engagement can have a large and positive impact on children's learning. It should not be confused with parental representation on a board and neither should it be seen as a one-off exercise for organisations. Boards should ensure that their organisation is regularly communicating with parents and carers and that parental engagement is used by the board to inform their strategic decision-making. Communications with parents and carers should be clear in supporting them to understand the structure of the school, how it operates, and how they can support their child's education.*
16. *All boards should assure themselves that mechanisms are in place for their organisation to engage meaningfully with all parents and carers. Parents and carers should be able to use these mechanisms to put forward their views at key points in their child's education. Boards should aim to build productive relationships, not only with parents and carers but also with the local community to create a sense of trust and shared ownership of the organisation's strategy, vision and operational performance.*
17. *Boards should be able to demonstrate the methods used to seek the views of parents, carers and the local community. They should also be able to show how those views have influenced their decision making and how they have fed back to parents, carers and the local community.*

What does this mean in practice?

You're not bringing complaints from parents to the board's attention. Rather, you're highlighting how governing board decisions impact the school from a parent's perspective.

Example	Do ask	Don't say
School uniform change	'Have parents been consulted on the proposed uniform changes? If not, why not?'	'As a parent, I've spoken to other parents in the playground and we all think the uniform shouldn't change.'
	'How have the proposed changes been explained to parents?'	
	'Has the cost of this change to parents been considered?'	
Canteen menu change	'How have parents been consulted on the new menu?'	'Parents have come up to me asking why the menu has changed. They say they prefer the old one.'
	'Has the school explained to parents the reasons behind the change?'	
	'What alternative provision is available for pupils whose parents disagree with the menu changes?'	
	'How will this change impact parents?'	
Curriculum change	'How has the school communicated the curriculum change to parents?'	'Parents want to me express to you that they disagree with the changes. They don't feel the changes reflect what they want their children to be taught.'
	'Have parents been given the opportunity to ask questions and get further clarity?'	'A number of parents have told me they're confused about why the curriculum has changed.'

Set expectations with other parents

Help other parents understand that you're **not** there to:

- Speak on their behalf
- Bring up their individual issues in meetings
- Solve problems for them

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

Get up to speed with your school's complaints procedure and staff list, so you can quickly direct parents to how/where they can raise their issue.

If another parent approaches you at the school gate with a grievance:

- **Do** ask the parent to put it in writing and follow the school's complaints procedure. Tell them how/where they can raise their issue. 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

Don't respond to comments on social media in your governor role

You might 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.

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** pupils at the school, so keep this at the forefront of your mind in meetings.

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 pupils, staff, parents and the community. This is set out in the [Governance Handbook](#) (page 9).

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 your school's complaints procedure like any other parent

If you have a complaint concerning your child, you must follow your school's complaints procedure, even as a parent governor.

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 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.

If you have concerns over a governing board decision

Again, remember to keep your role as a parent separate from your role as a governor.

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

The Key for Governors

March 2021