

# **School Governors - How You Can Make A Difference**

## **Governors are people like you**

Don't be put off from applying because you are not an expert. Ask yourself instead:

- are you open to new ideas and ready to learn?
- are you prepared to work as part of a team?
- do you have some spare time, especially in the evenings and weekends, to go to meetings or read papers?
- do you want to put something into your local community?
- do you get on with other people?

If you can answer 'Yes' to these questions, and you live, work or have an interest in the area, then you already have the makings of a school governor. You don't need special qualifications, but you do need to be ready to read a fair amount of paper, think about ideas and ask questions like:

- What is most important for the school?
- Where are we now?
- Where do we need to get to?

Governors need to work closely with others to make good decisions and make sure that their decisions are followed up. Governors need to ask questions, gather views and then decide what is in the school's best interests. It helps to be a listener - you will stand a much better chance of understanding how the school ticks. Time and again new governors have been surprised at how their experiences can be used to help solve a problem at their school. You don't have to be a specialist. Think about the skills you use in everyday life.

## **It's not easy being a Governor**

To be honest being a governor can be hard work at times. There may sometimes be a lot of papers to read, and meetings to attend. Governors may need to make difficult decisions about individual pupils or members of staff and Governors are voluntary too!

## **So why do people do it?**

There are as many answers to this as there are governors. However many find the work is satisfying because it gives them the chance to:

- make a difference to how well the school runs;
- do something for the next generation;
- serve the local community; and
- learn new skills and gain new interests.

Working as part of a team, towards a common goal is also something that most governors find very rewarding? Governors have to be prepared to give and take and to be loyal to decisions taken by the governing body as a whole. So long as they act within the law governors are protected from any financial liability for the decisions they take. The governing body usually meets at least once a term. Many Governors also sit on one or two of the committees that look in detail at areas such as finance, the curriculum, staffing or the premises.

Being a governor involves more than just taking an interest, though that is an important part of the job. Governors can learn a lot by visiting the school and talking to staff. It also means regularly putting aside some spare time in the evenings and occasionally at weekends, the amount of time varies widely, depending on how involved you become and what needs doing. Governors have a legal right to ask their employer for unpaid leave.