



## PROCEDURE FOR ELECTING PARENT AND STAFF GOVERNORS

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## **1 Introduction**

The Trust's responsibility for conducting parent and staff governor elections is delegated to the Principal of each school who acts as 'returning officer' in accordance with the procedures outlined below. Neither the Local Governing Body (LGB), nor the Clerk has any role in the election process for parent and staff governors.

## **2 Term of Office**

Each Local Governing Body has two parent governors and one staff governor. The term of office for each position is 4 years, unless an existing elected staff or parent governor stands down before their 4-year term expires, in which case their replacement will be elected for the remainder of the original 4-year term of office.

If a parent or staff governor resigns during the 12-month period following their election, then the candidate with the next highest number of votes in that election may be substituted for the original successful candidate without a further election being held. In the event of a tie, the Principal will draw lots.

## **3. Election of parent governors**

### **3.1 Who Is Eligible to Stand as a Parent Governor and Vote in The Elections?**

Any parent (or a person exercising parental responsibility [carer]) for a pupil registered at the school may stand for election as a parent governor, provided that they are not disqualified from holding office as a governor (see below).

A governor must be aged 18 or over at the time of his or her election or appointment and cannot hold more than one governorship position at the same school.

If after an election process, no parent governor is elected/appointed, the Trust Board may appoint parent governors in accordance with the Articles of Association and the disqualification criteria.

### **3.2 Disqualification for Standing for Office as a Parent Governor**

No parent (or carer) in paid employment at the school can stand for election / appointment as a parent governor at the same school which their child attends. If a serving parent governor subsequently starts work at the school, they will serve out their term of office as a parent governor, but would not be able to stand for re-election as a parent governor.

Election/appointment as a parent governor is subject to satisfactory Enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) and s128 checks. If as a result of these checks the

Trust CEO, or Principal or the Secretary of State for Education determines that the person is unsuitable to work with children, that person will be disqualified from taking office.

If without the prior consent of the LGB a parent governor fails to attend LGB meetings for a continuous period of 6 months, their term of office will end and a further election held. If this occurs during the 12-month period following their election, then the candidate with the next highest number of votes in that election may be substituted for the original successful candidate without a further election being held.

If a parent governor becomes incapable of managing their own affairs by reason of illness or injury, their term of office will end and a further election held.

### **3.3 Election Procedures**

When there is a vacancy or prospective vacancy for a parent governor, every eligible parent and carer must be given the opportunity to participate in the elections, but there is no obligation on the school to track down such persons.

The first step is for the Principal to write to all parents to invite nominations (Appendix A), enclosing a sheet setting out the qualifications and disqualifications to serve as a governor and a nomination form (Appendix B). The letter should indicate the closing date for receipt of nominations, which must be not less than 14 days. Letters and enclosures may be sent either via pupils or through electronic communications.

Self-nomination is acceptable provided that the Principal is satisfied that the nominee is not disqualified from being a governor.

The nomination form invites candidates to submit a short personal statement for circulation to parents with the ballot papers; there is a limit of 200 words.

Where the number of candidates nominated is the same as, or fewer than, the number of vacancies then all those nominated will be elected unopposed. If there are more candidates than vacancies, a ballot will be arranged.

Ballots, when required, must be secret. To ensure confidentiality a 'double envelope system' will be used. Each parent will be sent two envelopes with a ballot paper – one blank and one printed envelope (Appendix C), the latter being for the parent to complete to allow the Principal to check eligibility to vote. The parent is asked first to seal the completed ballot paper in the unmarked envelope and then to seal that envelope in the printed envelope, which the voter should then complete and sign.

It is quite acceptable for the pupils to be asked to deliver and return the ballot papers. Parents may return their vote by post if they so wish. Ballot papers will be posted, or otherwise delivered, to any parents whose child is absent from school when the ballot papers are issued.

A single ballot paper (irrespective of the number of children the parent has in attendance at the school) must be sent to each known parent or carer (Appendix D). The letter, which must accompany the ballot paper (Appendix E) explains the voting procedure and should also give the date by which the ballot papers must be returned

- at least 14 days must be allowed.

Parents are allowed one vote each. If a ballot paper is inadvertently spoiled, or lost by a pupil, a duplicate may be issued. No arrangements may be made for proxy voting.

A two-stage system of opening ballot papers and recording votes cast will be used. As and when the envelopes are returned, the Principal (or his/her delegate) should, in the presence of at least one witness, check the name on each outer envelope for entitlement to vote and make a record of the return of the ballot paper. The inner envelope containing the ballot paper should be removed from the outer envelope and placed in the ballot box for counting at the appointed time. (If a voter chooses not to maintain confidentiality in this way, the ballot paper is to be counted as valid so long as it is clear from the ballot paper or the single envelope that the person is entitled to vote.)

When the ballot has closed, the Principal should open the ballot box and count the ballot papers in the presence of at least two witnesses. The Principal is responsible for determining whether a 'spoiled' ballot paper should be counted.

The outcome of the ballot is determined by the simple majority vote system.

In the event of an equal number of votes being cast there should be a recount. If this does not produce a clear result the Principal should, in the presence of the witnesses, draw lots.

When the result is known, the Principal will advise all candidates and parents electronically of the outcome, giving details of the number of votes cast for each candidate.

Where a substantial number of parents have a language other than English as their main language, the school will provide assistance.

The ballot papers will be retained securely for six months in case the election result is challenged. The number of ballot papers issued and returned at each election will be recorded.

Details of the successful candidate(s) should be sent to Clerk and Trust Business Manager. The Trust Business Manager will arrange for the DBS and s128 checks and if satisfactory will update GIAS and notify the Clerk of this. The Clerk will advise the successful candidate(s) that the checks have been completed and notify the Trust Board and Local Governing Body of the election results. The Clerk will commence the induction process of the new governor(s).

Schools must make every reasonable effort to fill parent governor vacancies through elections. If insufficient parents stand for election the Trust Board can appoint:

- (a) a parent or person exercising parental responsibility of a registered pupil at the school; or if that is not possible;
- (b) a parent or person exercising parental responsibility of a child in the age range of the school.

## 4. Election of Staff Governors

Each local governing body must have one staff governor, in addition to the Principal. The position of staff governor can be held by either full or part time teaching staff or support staff. Governors can be drawn from staff holding a very wide range of posts, as this category includes staff employed at the school, as well as staff on a contract for services.

Supply teachers employed on a daily basis are not eligible to stand as candidates for staff governor or vote in any election for such a position.

The election of staff governors involves all staff in the voting process. All staff will be invited to vote in staff governor elections.

### 4.1 Election Procedures

When there is a vacancy or prospective vacancy for a staff governor, every teacher or support staff member employed to work at the school must be given the opportunity of participating in the election.

The first step is for the Principal to write to all relevant staff to invite nominations, enclosing a sheet setting out the qualifications to serve as a governor and a nomination form (Appendix B). The letter should indicate the closing date for receipt of nominations, which must be not less than 14 days.

Staff who are nominated for election must be employed to work at the school either as teachers or support staff on the closing date for nominations.

The nomination form invites candidates to give brief biographical details to go out with the ballot forms; there is a word limit of 200 words.

Where the number of nominations received is the same as or less than the number of vacancies, candidates will be elected unopposed. If there are more nominations than vacancies, it will be necessary to arrange a ballot. In the absence of any nomination, there is no facility for the Trust Board to make an appointment of a staff governor.

The ballot will be secret and the Principal should ensure that each ballot paper (Appendix E) - is stamped with a distinguishing mark and that a record is kept of the number ballot papers issued.

A ballot paper, which must make it clear that all staff may vote for one candidate, must be sent to all members of the staff who are eligible to vote.

Staff should vote in person wherever possible. However, any member of staff may choose to return their ballot by post (for example if they are on maternity leave or are temporarily absent from the school). No arrangements may be made for proxy voting.

The Principal should open and count the ballot papers in the presence of the candidates or their nominated representatives and will be responsible for determining whether a 'spoiled' ballot paper should be counted.

The outcome of the ballot is determined by the simple majority vote system.

In the event of an equal number of votes being cast there should be a recount and

if this does not produce a clear result the Principal should draw lots in the presence of the candidates or their representatives.

The Principal must ensure that the staff are notified of the outcome and the number of votes cast for each candidate after when the result is known.

The ballot papers should be retained securely for six months in case the election result is challenged. The number of ballot papers issued and returned at each election will be recorded.

Details of the successful candidate(s) should be sent to Clerk and Trust Business Manager. The Trust Business Manager will arrange for a s128 check (if required) and if satisfactory will update GIAS and notify the Clerk of this. The Clerk will advise the successful candidate that the checks have been completed and notify the Trust Board and Local Governing Body of the election results. The Clerk will commence the induction process of the new governor.

Should the staff governor cease to be employed at the school the appointment will immediately end.

## 5. Appendix A: Invitation for Parent Governor Nominations

### 5.1 Parent Governors

We are looking for parent governors to join our governing body. This pack provides information about the role of parent governors, the role of the Local Governing Body and about Saracens Multi-Academy Trust (SMAT).

The Trust sets the vision and over-arching strategy for the education provided by the schools within the Trust.

### 5.2 The Local Governing Body

Each SMAT school has its own governing body which includes two parent governors and one staff governor. Each school within the Trust has a Local Governing Body comprising governors appointed by the Board of Trustees. Its primary role is to:

- Undertake the duties delegated to it by the Board of Trustees
- Ensure sound management of the school's Admissions Policy and practices in accordance with the School Admissions Code, including considering applications for admission on the grounds of exceptional medical or social need
- Implement the Trust's strategy, educational vision, ethos and principles within their school.
- In conjunction with the Trust CEO, school target-setting, including contributing to and monitoring of the school development plan
- In conjunction with the Trust CEO, hold the Principal to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of school staff
- Designate named Governors to have oversight of Safeguarding, SEND, Anti- Bullying and Looked After Children
- Fulfil statutory responsibilities around fixed term and permanent exclusions of pupils
- Oversee the financial performance of the school and make sure its money is well spent
- Connect with the local community, particularly parents and carers communicating with them through the consultations, the school website, social media and newsletters and feedback to the Board through the CEO
- Consider any complaints about the school and any community facilities or services provided, in accordance with the Trust's Complaints policy and Procedure



Parent governors are important members of the Local Governing Body bringing the parent and community perspective to the group. A briefing about the role of parent governors is included in this pack along with an application to become a parent governor (which is also available online at the school website).

### **5.3 Being A Parent Governor**

Parent governors are in a unique position on a Local Governing Body. Not only do parent governors have to work in the best interests of the school, but they have to balance this with their natural desire to see the best outcomes for their own child(ren). The aim of this briefing paper is to offer advice to new parent governors on their specific role and suggest ways of handling some of the tricky situations which may arise.

Developing your role and experience as a governor will take time. There is training, advice, help and support available.

#### **Parent governors are:**

- well placed to understand parents' views and to remind the governing body how matters being discussed affect parents;
- individuals - how you vote on any decision is up to you;
- in a good position to help the local governing body to communicate effectively with parents;
- equal in status to all other governors.

#### **Parent governors are not:**

- expected to gather views of other parents and take them to the governing body;
- simply expected to represent the interests of parents;
- an official link between parents and the governing body;
- expected to vote as instructed by other parents.

#### **What are the benefits of being a parent governor?**

- you have the opportunity to make a difference, not only for your children, but all the children in the school;
- you have the opportunity to make a difference for other parents and carers, and to influence the way in which the school works with them;
- you will learn a lot and develop new skills.

## **How to fulfil your role?**

- attend governing body meetings regularly and play an active role in committees and decision-making;
- learn all you can about the school;
- consider how the Local Governing Body communicates with parents - could you help them to improve links?
- consider how approachable is the school – how easy is it for parents to go into school to raise concerns with the Principal or teachers?
- providing feedback to help the school to be more open and welcoming;
- providing feedback on the accessibility of the governors – do parents ever get the opportunity to meet with governors; do they know how to get in touch with the Chair of Governors if they need to?
- encouraging the Local Governing Body to be more visible
- learning how the school handles complaints and reading the Complaints Policy and Procedure - if a parent approaches you with a complaint, advising them to raise their concerns with the Principal and/or in accordance with the Complaints Policy and Procedure;
- being approachable to other parents while making sure you are clear about your role;
- always representing the school positively;
- as a governor you are one of a group and must never act alone;
- always supporting the decisions of the full governing body. - have your say on decisions in meetings and vote in the way you wish; but then support the outcomes of votes – even if you disagree with them.
- always, always, always observe confidentiality -you will get to know a lot of highly sensitive and confidential information – don't discuss it with anyone who is not a governor. - remember, a governor can be suspended for serious breaches of confidentiality.

## **How you can help individual parents**

From time to time you may be approached by other parents asking for help, or wanting to make a complaint about something the school is, or isn't doing.

- make it clear you can't act for the governing body.
- inform them that they need to raise the issue with the school or formally in accordance with the Complaints Policy and Procedure.

## **What to do if you experience a conflict between being a parent and being a Governor**

This can happen – especially if you think the Local Governing Body is making decisions which you feel will adversely affect your child(ren).

- If a difficulty arises, take a step back and think things through as objectively as you can.

- If you are concerned, talk to the Principal or to the Chair of Governors.
- Make sure you don't break confidentiality when discussing your concerns outside governing body meetings.

### **Induction and training**

At Saracens Multi-Academy Trust we believe that it is essential that all new governors receive a full induction. This will largely be completed online over a number of weeks and new appointees will be personally supported by a nominated governor "buddy". Further training and mentoring will be provided, particularly for any specific link role. All governors undertake mandatory update training every year.

Our aim is to ensure that all new governors feel well supported from the moment they join the LGB.

### **Time Commitment**

There are normally 4 full LGB meetings each year, plus an additional face to face and online training. These meetings take place in school and all governors are members of either the Resources or Quality of Education Sub-Committee which meet termly. All these meetings are in the early evening, are normally face to face, but may be hybrid meetings in exceptional circumstances.

Governors may also be asked to participate in Exclusion, Admissions, Disciplinary, Grievance and Complaints hearings. These meetings will normally take place during the school day. Full training will be provided.

A full role description is available from the school. The Trust Governance Plan, which includes the terms of reference of each committee is available on the SMAT website here [https://saracensmat.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/SMAT\\_GOVERNANCE\\_PLAN\\_July\\_2021.pdf](https://saracensmat.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/SMAT_GOVERNANCE_PLAN_July_2021.pdf)

### **Nomination**

If you wish to put yourself forward for election as a parent governor, please complete and sign the attached nomination form and return it to the school no later than (insert date and time). Please provide a short pen portrait of what you can bring to the role including your relevant skills and experience, your commitment to undergo relevant training, how you believe you can contribute to the work of the LGB and if seeking re-election, what you have previously contributed as a parent governor.

## 5.4 Appendix B - Nomination form for election of parent / staff governor(s)

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

Email address:

Pen Portrait (maximum 200 words)

I wish to submit my nomination for the election of Parent/Staff Governor

I confirm

- (i) that I am willing to stand as a candidate for election as a parent/staff governor and
- (ii) I am over 18 years of age and I am the parent or person having caring responsibility (carer) of one or more children registered to attend the school and
- (iii) that I am not disqualified from holding office as an employee at the school and
- (iv) that I agree that any election as a parent governor is subject to satisfactory Enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) and s128 checks. If as a result of these checks the Trust CEO, or Principal or the Secretary of State for Education determines that I am unsuitable to work with children, I will accept that I am disqualified from taking office and
- (v) that, without the prior consent of the LGB I fail to attend LGB meetings for a continuous period of 6 months, my term of office will end and a further election held and
- (vi) that if I become incapable of managing my own affairs by reason of illness or injury, my term of office will end and a further election held.

Signature (Date)

Completed nomination forms must be returned to the school by <insert date>

## 6. Appendix C - Model Ballot Envelope

ELECTION OF PARENT GOVERNOR

at ..... School

Voting form returned by:

Name .....

Signature .....

Parent of .....

Form .....

## 7. Appendix D – Letter to parents where a vote is required

**Dear Parent,**

I am writing to advise you that there were more nominations than vacancies for the recently advertised post of parent governor.

Therefore, a ballot will take place.

Overleaf you will find a ballot paper (one per parent).

### **How to vote:**

Place an X in the right hand column against the candidate(s) of your choice. No other distinguishing marks of any kind should be made on the ballot paper.

- You have one vote.
- Only parents/carers of registered pupils at the school are eligible to vote.
- No parent/carer is entitled to complete more than one ballot paper (irrespective of the number of children at the school).
- Please return the ballot paper by **time** on **date**

Ballot papers should be placed in a sealed envelope and should not contain the name of the sender.

The results of the ballot will be publicised immediately after the count.

Yours sincerely

**Principal**

## 9 Appendix E

### OFFICIAL BALLOT PAPER ELECTION OF PARENT GOVERNOR(S)

1 vote

Name of Candidate	Supporting Statement	Place Your X Here

#### How to vote:

Place an X in the right hand column against the candidate of your choice. No other distinguishing marks of any kind should be made on the ballot paper.

- You have one vote.
- Only parents/carers of registered pupils at the school are eligible to vote.
- No parent/carer is entitled to complete more than one ballot paper (irrespective of the number of children at the school).

The ballot paper must be returned to the Principal, in a sealed envelope, no later than

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Discipline

Hard Work

Honesty

Humility

**time** on **date**. The name of the voter must not be written on the envelope. All envelopes will be placed in a sealed ballot box.