

Primary Advantage Federation parent governor information pack

Dear parent,

I am writing to invite you to consider standing for the role of parent governor for Primary Advantage Federation's governing body. The governing body has two parent governors and one of these positions is vacant. To stand, you must be the parent or full-time carer of a child in one of the federation's eight schools on both the date nominations close and the closing date for returning ballot papers. Parent governors are elected to serve for a four-year period and can complete their term even if they no longer have a child in a federation school.

Role of the governing body and governors

The governing body, along with the executive principal, has overall responsibility for the running of the federation. Governing bodies have three core functions:

- ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- holding the executive principal and headteachers to account for the educational performance of the federation and its pupils;
- overseeing the financial performance of the federation and making sure its money is well spent.

All governors have the same roles and responsibilities. The role and responsibilities of a governor are set out in further detail in the attached governor role description published by the National Governance Association – see *Appendix 1: What does a governor do?*

Please note that the role relates to all eight federation schools, not just the school your child attends.

Expectations of governors

The main time commitment for governors is preparing for and attending meetings. You will be a voting member of the Central Governing Board (CGB), which consists of all governors. You will also be a voting member of one of our two committees and/or one of the eight local advisory boards (LABs). Which committee or LAB you join will depend on the needs of the organization at the time of your appointment. However, as your role covers the whole federation, you will not serve on the LAB for the school your child attends.

The CGB, committees and LABs meet at least once a term in the early evening and most of them take place over Google Meet.

You will also be asked to serve on ad hoc panels of governors for HR or complaints appeals or exclusion reviews. Ad hoc panels are always during the school day and usually take place in person.

You may be asked to act as link governor on a specific issue, talking to the relevant staff, and reporting to the governing body on progress on a federation priority.

Is the parent governor different to other governors?

Not really. Your role is to bring a parental perspective to the issues discussed – you're not there to speak on behalf of the parent body.

Who is eligible?

You can apply if your children will be attending a federation school on the following dates:

- 13 November 2023 (close of nominations)
- 29 November 2023 (close of voting)

Applications are encouraged from people of all backgrounds and all levels of experience.

There is a list of disqualifications in appendix 3 and it's important that you read this to ensure none of them apply to you. In addition, if you are considering removing your children from a federation school in the next few months, please contact the Governance Manager before applying for the governor position.

Training

The federation has developed five bespoke training sessions for governors and LAB members, which are usually run annually. This includes an induction session. You will also have access to training through GovernorHub Knowledge, Governors for Schools and other organisations.

1:1 support and training is available from the Governance Manager at any time.

How to apply

If you would like to stand for election, please send me a statement of no more than 500 words explaining why you have the skills to carry out the role. This statement will be sent to all parents and carers in the event of an election.

If there is only one nominee, s/he will be elected automatically as a parent governor. If more than one candidate applies, an election will take place in which all parents and carers will be entitled to vote.

Should an election take place, ballot papers will be sent out electronically on 15 November 2023 and will need to be returned by 29 November 2023.

Any questions?

If you have any queries about this process or would like to find out more about the role, please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

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Appendix 1: What does a governor do?

Role of a school governor: To contribute to the work of the governing body in ensuring high standards of achievement for all children and young people in the federation's schools by:

- setting the federation's vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- holding the executive principal and headteachers to account for the educational performance of the federation, its schools and its pupils;
- overseeing the financial performance of the federation and making sure its money is well spent.

Activities: As part of the governing body team, a governor is expected to:

1. Contribute to the strategic discussions at governing body meetings which determine:

- the vision and ethos of the federation;
- clear and ambitious strategic priorities and targets for the federation;
- that all children, including those with special educational needs, have access to a broad and balanced curriculum;
- the federation's budget, including the expenditure of the pupil premium allocation;
- the federation's staffing structure and key staffing policies;
- the principles to be used by school leaders to set other federation policies.

2. Hold the senior leaders to account by monitoring the federation's performance. This includes:

- agreeing the outcomes from the schools' self-evaluations and ensuring they are used to inform the priorities in school development plans;
- considering all relevant data and feedback provided on request by school leaders and external sources on all aspects of federation and school performance;
- asking challenging questions of federation and school leaders;
- ensuring senior leaders have arranged for the required audits to be carried out and receiving the results of those audits;
- ensuring senior leaders have developed the required policies and procedures and the federation and its schools are operating effectively according to those policies;
- acting as a link governor on a specific issue, making relevant enquiries of the relevant staff, and reporting to the governing body on the progress on the relevant priority;
- listening to and reporting to the federation's stakeholders: pupils, parents, staff and the wider community.

3. Ensure federation and school staff have the resources and support they require to do their jobs well, including the necessary expertise on business management, external advice where necessary, effective appraisal and CPD (Continuing Professional Development), and suitable premises, and that the way in which those resources are used has impact.

4. When required, serve on panels of governors to:

- appoint the executive principal, headteachers and other senior leaders;
- appraise the executive principal (with the exception of the staff governor);
- set the executive principal's and headteachers' pay and agree the pay recommendations for other staff (with the exception of the staff governor);
- hear the second stage of staff grievances and disciplinary matters;
- hear appeals about pupil exclusions.

The role of governor is largely a thinking and questioning role, not a doing role.

A governor does NOT:

- write federation policies;
- undertake audits of any sort – whether financial or health & safety - even if the governor has the relevant professional experience;
- spend much time with the pupils of the federation – if you want to work directly with children, there are many other voluntary valuable roles within the federation;
- fundraise – this is the role of the parent-teacher association (PTA) – the governing body should consider income streams and the potential for income generation, but not carry out fundraising tasks;
- undertake classroom observations to make judgements on the quality of teaching – the governing body monitors the quality of teaching in the federation by requiring data from the senior staff and from external sources;
- do the job of the federation staff – if there is not enough capacity within the paid staff team to carry out the necessary tasks, the governing body need to consider and rectify this.

Additional roles: As you become more experienced as a governor, there are other roles you could volunteer for which would increase your degree of involvement and level of responsibility (e.g. as a chair of a committee). This document does not cover the additional roles taken on by the chair, vice-chair and chairs of committees. The staff governor cannot be the chair or vice-chair of the Central Governing Board but s/he can chair committees.

In order to perform this role well, a governor is expected to:

- get to know the federation and its schools, including by visiting schools occasionally during school hours, and gain a good understanding of schools' strengths and weaknesses;
- attend induction training and regular relevant training and development events;
- attend meetings (full governing body meetings and committee meetings) and read all the papers before the meeting;
- act in the best interest of all the pupils of the federation;
- behave in a professional manner, as set down in the governing body's code of conduct, including acting in strict confidence.

Time commitment: Under usual circumstances, you should expect to spend between 10 and 20 days a year on your governing responsibilities. The top end of this commitment, which equates to about half a day per week in term time, is most relevant to the chair and others with key roles, such as chairs of committees. Initially, we would expect your commitment to be nearer 10 days a year. However, there may be periods when the time commitment may increase, for example when recruiting a headteacher. Some longstanding governors may tell you that they spend far more time than this on school business; however, it is fairly common for governors to undertake additional volunteering roles over and above governance.

Under Section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996, if you are employed, then you are entitled to 'reasonable time off' to undertake public duties; this includes school governance. 'Reasonable time off' is not defined in law, and you will need to negotiate with your employer how much time you will be allowed.

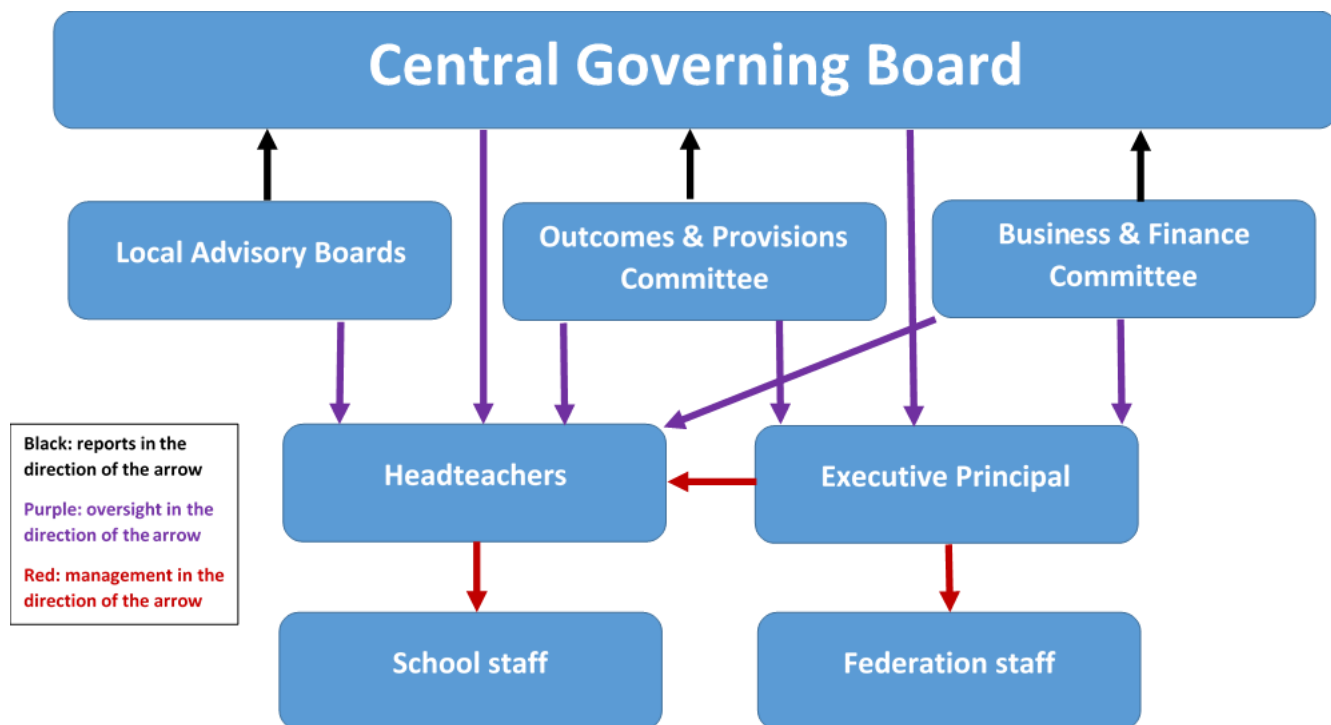
Expenses: Governors may receive out of pocket expenses incurred as a result of fulfilling their role as governor. Payments can cover incidental expenses, such as travel and childcare, but not loss of earnings.

This document has been adapted from *Welcome to Governance 6th Edition* published by the National Governance Association.

Appendix 2: A brief guide to governance at Primary Advantage

Primary Advantage Federation (PAF) is a hard federation of eight primary schools in Hackney.

The following structure seeks to capture the relationships between the governance elements of Primary Advantage and its eight schools.



The key elements of this structure and their roles are:

- **Central Governing Board (CGB)** holds the legal powers of governing bodies of all federation schools. It ensures clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction and holds the Executive Principal to account for performance of each school and the federation as a whole. The CGB delegates some responsibilities to LABs, committees and staff.
- **Committees.** To achieve its functions, the CGB delegates some responsibilities to two committees, Business & Finance Committee and Outcomes & Provisions Committee. Further committees may be established as needed.
- **The Appeals Panel** hears appeals in relation to human resources, complaints and exclusions.
- **Local Advisory Boards (LABs).** There is a LAB for each school. Each LAB contains a federation governor as well as staff, parents and members of the local community. The main job of the LAB is to provide oversight of decisions made by the Headteacher and senior leadership team at the school.
- **Executive Team** delivers the vision and values of federation and oversees strategic operations. The Executive Principal performance manages each Headteacher.
- **Headteachers** are responsible for the performance and management of their school and for aligning to the federation vision, ethos and strategic direction.

Appendix 3: Qualifications and disqualifications for parent governors

Qualification

To stand as a parent governor you must be the parent or full-time carer of a child registered at one of the eight schools that are part of Primary Advantage Federation.

Disqualifications

According to schedule 4 of The School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012 and statutory guidance on these regulations, a person is disqualified from holding or from continuing to hold office as a parent governor of a school at any time when they:

- Are a registered pupil at any federation school.
- Are under 18 years old.
- Fail to attend their meetings for six consecutive months.
- Are the subject of:
 - A bankruptcy restrictions order, or an interim bankruptcy restrictions order.
 - A debt relief restrictions order, or an interim debt relief restrictions order.
 - An undischarged sequestration.
- Are disqualified from being a company director and/or a charity trustee.
- Have been removed from office as an elected governor within the last five years.
- Are included in the list of those unsuitable to work with children.
- Are disqualified from working with children, barred from regulated activity and/or disqualified from registering for childminding or providing daycare.
- Have been sentenced to three months or more in prison (without the option of a fine) in the five years before becoming a governor or since becoming a governor.
- Have received a prison sentence of two-and-a-half years or more in the 20 years before becoming a governor.
- Have at any time received a prison sentence of 5 years or more.
- Have been fined for causing a nuisance or disturbance on school premises during the five years prior to or since appointment or election as a governor.
- Refuse a request by the clerk to make an application to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).
- Are elected members (councillors) of the local authority (this is Hackney Council in relation to the federation).
- Are paid to work at any federation school for more than 500 hours in a year.

In addition:

- If you are the only candidate, you will be disqualified if you have withdrawn your child(ren) from a federation school on or before 13 November 2023.
- If there is more than one candidate and there is a contested election, you will be disqualified if you have withdrawn your child(ren) from a federation school on or before 29 November 2023.