

## Could you join The Firs Lower School Governing Board?

Sarah Walker, Chair of Governors, answers some of the questions you might have....

### What is the role of School Governor?

A school governor plays the role of **'the critical friend'**, providing challenge and support to the school's leaders. They have a **strategic**, as opposed to operational, role that ensures accountability and insists that the best interests of all pupils are paramount in decision making. They determine the **aims and values** of the school, and check that the decisions the school is making are in alignment with these aims and values. Governors monitor the implementation of, and review the broad policies, plans and procedures within which the school operates. Rarely, Governors may be involved in complaints that are not resolved by the Headteacher or Chair of Governors. Governors also serve as a board of Members and Trustees. More information can be found here: <https://www.nga.org.uk/about/become-a-governor-trustee/>

### What skills do Governors need?

Many Governors bring useful skills to the board from their day job, but it is important to remember you are not expected to be an educational professional or have an operational role - if you have **an eye for detail or a curious mind**, you can ask challenging questions and make a difference. For example, I am a vet in a clinical (non-management) role, and have found the role rewarding and that I can make a difference. We are always grateful, however, to have support from people with **HR, IT, Accounting, Health and Safety, Premises Management, Safeguarding, Mental Health or Education experience**.

### Who can be a school governor?

Anyone who fulfils the requirements below! We have vacancies for elected parents and co-opted community Governors (non-parents with useful skills or time to support the school).

- DBS check
- Willingness to complete Level 2 safeguarding course (one hour, online)
- Eligibility to be a Trustee of a charity (i.e. no unspent convictions, previous bankruptcy or disqualified as a previous Trustee)
- Willingness to verify your identity for Companies House (a quick online Government Gateway process)

### What does the role involve and what is the time commitment?

Governors meet **seven times a year for Full Governing Board** meetings; these are currently held 7-9pm on Mondays. Three meetings are in person and four are online. Information and data is circulated about a week in advance and it is helpful if you can read some of it before the meeting.

We use an **online platform** (Governor Hub) to circulate documents, post questions if you cannot make a meeting in person, and to sign off policies and management accounts electronically.

Most Governors also hold a '**link role**' and meet termly or yearly with the staff responsible for the role, and report back to the full governing board. Where appropriate, these are aligned with your skill set or interest. Ideally, these are in school hours for staff wellbeing.

We hold three '**learning walks**' per year, where Governors visit during the school day to see specific areas of the school in action, usually linked to the School Development Plan.

Sometimes, we might create a working group for a specific project.

We know that life and children throw many curved balls, so whilst we hope most Governors attend most things, we know that you won't be able to make everything. A good board shares the load and everyone contributes in different ways.

This totals approximately **30-40 hours a year, equivalent to less than an hour a week term time**, so a similar commitment to coaching football or leading Beavers. It sometimes comes in fits and starts though. All positions are a standard four years, but there is no obligation to stay for four years. In reality, it takes a couple of terms to learn the ropes so we hope you stay for a couple of years or more.

### What are the link roles?

- Finance and Environment (A group of two or three Governors, one vacancy)
- Safeguarding and Attendance (Currently filled but a shadow is welcome so we have a rolling succession plan)
- SEND (Currently filled by the Chair but the role is available with support for anyone interested)
- Pupil Premium Grant (Currently filled by the Chair but the role is available with support for anyone interested)
- Sports Premium Grant (Currently filled by the Chair but the role is available with support for anyone interested)
- Literacy (currently filled)
- Maths (currently filled but a shadow is welcome so we have a rolling succession plan)
- Early Years (currently vacant)
- Head Teacher Performance Management (currently filled)

### What support is there?

GovernorHub has lots of online training to support you, from quick-read articles to example questions and self-assessed courses. Experienced Governors are there for guidance. Mr Campbell is also a great support to Governors, he's seen a few over the years! There are some closed, monitored Facebook groups for peer support.

### **What will the role offer me? Will I enjoy it?**

This is a professional rather than 'fun' role, but I have found it hugely interesting to learn how the school runs. It is really rewarding to see ideas and feedback I have given put into action, and I am proud to be shaping the future of our school. I feel valued and that I add value, and for me that is what volunteering is about. The role has developed me as a person, built my confidence and I have a far wider skill set than when I began - who knows where that may lead me in the future? If that resonates with you, then yes I hope you will enjoy it!

### **I'm interested, what shall I do now?**

If you have any further questions, please reach out to Sarah Walker (Chair of Governors) or any other Governors you know in person or via email - details are here: [Our Governors](#)

Enquiries to [office@firslower.org](mailto:office@firslower.org) will be forwarded to us.

If you are a parent and are ready to apply, please fill in an application form here: (link TBC)

If you are interested in a co-opted position, please send a brief summary of your experience and skills and why you're interested in the role, to [office@firslower.org](mailto:office@firslower.org).