

## Guildford Diocesan Board of Education –

### Guidance for Clergy Governors of Church schools and Church academies v4

#### Audience

This guidance is for incumbents in the Diocese of Guildford who have a Church of England school in their parish in which they hold ex-officio governor status.

This guidance should be read alongside:

- The Diocese of Guildford Guidance for Foundation Governors 2025.
- The Diocesan School and Church Partnership Audit Tool 2024.

#### Introduction

Having a church school in the parish is both a privilege and a joy. For many clergy involvement with the church school is a rewarding and satisfying part of their ministry. The Church of England Education Office's vision for church schools is that they are 'deeply Christian serving the common good.' The incumbent through their involvement in the school community will meet and minister to many parishioners. The school through the expertise and guidance of the incumbent will deepen the spiritual life of pupils, staff and families.

The role of the incumbent is very demanding with a significant number of responsibilities and priorities to manage across the parish or benefice. In addition, the expectations and responsibilities of school governors have significantly increased over recent years. The role of the incumbent as a governor of a Church school should be seen in the light of these demands and the purpose of this document is to help incumbents to help navigate the different priorities including the mission and ministry to the Church school in the parish.



Incumbents are encouraged to be involved in local schools in three areas of school life.

Pastoral care for the school community

Spiritual development activity in partnership with the school such as collective worship, school services

Foundation governor duties

These three areas may not be mutually exclusive as shown by the Venn diagram. For example, a prayer space may provide an opportunity to encounter God and support for mental health and wellbeing.

### **The legal position for incumbents with a church school in their parish**

- Incumbents are automatically an ex-officio governor in the maintained church school in the parish. There are a few situations where this may vary for example where the school is deanery school, or for historic reasons. The school's instrument of governance will identify the clergy person who is the ex-officio clergy governor of the school.

### **The Diocese of Guildford Recommendations**

The diocese recognise that the context of each parish / benefice is different, therefore the role of the clergy as school governors should be operated in a way that is practical for the parish, school and individuals involved.

- The role of Chair of Governors is an increasingly demanding role with heavy demands of time. Our recommendation is that clergy should not be Chair of Governors unless there is a specific, short-term need, and this should always be discussed with the DDE before accepting the role.
- That the incumbent is not expected to take on administrative governance responsibilities, their time should be focussed on supporting the Christian character of the school.
- Where an incumbent post is less than full time the incumbent should consult the archdeacon about whether they should take on a governance role.
- Only the archdeacon can appoint a governor in the place of the ex-officio member of the governing body of a maintained church school. The role may not be delegated to another individual by the clergy person themselves. The archdeacon will consult with the Diocesan Director of Education (DDE) before making the appointment.
- If a parish is in vacancy the archdeacon will liaise with the churchwardens to appoint to the ex-officio role until the new incumbent is in post.
- That the incumbent should meet with the Foundation Governors regularly to oversee and support their work in the school.

### **Recommendations where a parish has more than one church school**

- In a parish or benefice with more than one Church school the incumbent may be ex-officio in more than one Church school. The recommendation from the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) would be that the incumbent serves as an ex-officio governor in one school only. The incumbent should discuss which school this should be with the archdeacon.
- Where this occurs the incumbent and archdeacon will work together to identify a suitable person to represent the local church in the other school/s. This person could be another member of clergy; possibly a curate, an SSM or another member of the Church's ministry team. The archdeacon will make the appointment.
- The role of incumbent in this situation should be to draw the representatives from all the schools together to ensure a coherent approach to both mission, ministry and pastoral care.

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- This does not preclude working with both schools on spiritual and pastoral matters, however all involved need to be sensitive to the incumbent's workload. We have seen it work well when the incumbent and the head teachers of all the schools in the parish meet together to plan a joint programme for collective worship and services for the year that involve the incumbent without overloading them. This may involve other clergy, or laity in the parish leading worship.

### **Governance in academies**

The role of governor in a school that is an academy is different to being a governor in a maintained school. The local governor role varies between the different Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) in the diocese due to the different delegations that are put in place between the Trust Board and the local governance tier. Therefore the diocese cannot give generalised guidance about the clergy governor role in MATs.

If a church school in your parish is part of a multi academy trust you should ensure that you understand what the incumbent governance role looks like in your context.

### **The role of the clergy in developing the partnership between the church and the school**

When the partnership is effective the church school and the parish can work together for the spiritual flourishing of both the children and the adults associated with the school community. The activities that this partnership involves will be different in each context however there are a few common themes for effective partnership.

- A good relationship between the Headteacher and the Incumbent is vital. Even if much of the day-to-day interaction is done by others there does need to be regular conversation. Both are serving a shared community and will bring different knowledge of the parish to the conversation.
- When either the headteacher or incumbent is new to the parish there will need to be an investment of time to establish the relationship and maximise the opportunities from the incumbent's time in school.
- If people are in their first headship or first incumbency they need to be sensitive to one another's very steep learning curve as they begin their roles.
- The new person in either role may not have previous experience of the school and church partnership, including foundation governor roles. This may be the situation for experienced headteachers and clergy if their previous posts did not include a church school. It is helpful to access the diocesan induction training.
- Where either the headteacher or incumbent is new they should take care not to make assumptions that the new person will operate in the same way that their predecessor did. This

offers and opportunity to do things in a different way, making use of the strengths of the new partnership.

- This partnership works best when the choice of activities is planned jointly by the church and school for the academic year, with a focus spiritual flourishing underpinning decisions about what the church will offer. The Diocesan School and Church Partnership Audit Tool may be helpful with this.
- The incumbent does not have to be the person who does everything in the school. Consider the use of laity.
- There is no formal set of expectations about the involvement of the local incumbent within the SIAMS framework. The inspector will be interested in the impact of the incumbent's involvement in the school on the flourishing of the school community. Each school context is different.
- Where other members of the church are involved with the school it is helpful if they meet regularly with the incumbent to feedback, plan and pray.

The Matrix below shows where the responsibilities of a clergy governor relate to the three areas of school involvement.

<b>Responsibilities of clergy governor</b>	<b>Spiritual flourishing activity in partnership</b>	<b>Pastoral Care</b>	<b>School Governance</b>
To serve on the governing body for a term of four years or, where stipulated in the school's instrument of government, three years, once appointed by the Diocesan Board of Education			X
To encourage healthy partnerships between the school and the Diocesan Board of Education	X		X
To put forward a Christian perspective in discussions during governing body meetings including reference to guidance documents produced by the Diocesan Board of Education or the Church of England Education Office		X	X
To be active in evaluating the impact of collective worship. To ensure it takes place daily, is Christian in nature and meets the expectations in the <u>Church of England guidance</u> . That collective worship is invitational, inclusive and inspiring.			X
To become familiar with <u>SIAMS Framework</u> (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) and be willing to contribute during the inspection process	X	X	X
To understand the requirements for <u>Religious Education in a Church of England school</u> .			X

To report regularly to the PCC/Mission Community on the life of the school and ask that they are regularly prayed for by the church/mission community.	X		
To actively promote the church and school as hospitable communities to sustain mutually supportive links between the school, local church, and the wider community	X	X	