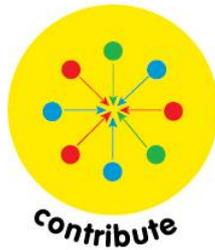


Guidance for Parent Governors

Our School Vision

Thomas Buxton Primary School will work with everyone to create a **happy, safe** and **stimulating** setting where children are motivated to **learn together**. By maintaining high expectations of ourselves and each other, our children will be equipped to encounter **opportunities** and **challenges** with **resilience** and **determination**. We encourage a **curiosity** about the world and strive to ensure that our children will contribute **positively**, now and in the future.



Our School Values

CREATE

Contribute We can all make this an exciting place to learn, discover and create.

Respect Treat everyone in our school equally, in everything we say and do.

Enjoy Celebrate our love of learning and recognise effort and achievement.

Aspire Aim high to ensure that everyone fulfils their potential.

Team Work Our collaborative culture ensures children, families and staff and learn together.

Enquire Ask questions, take risks, nurture curiosity and make discoveries.



INTRODUCTION

We strive to provide a good education for all our children. The Headteacher, staff and Governors work hard to build positive relationships with all parents and carers and to support this we have created this guidance for parents who take on the role of being a parent governor. A wider range of the school policies can be found on the school website.

www.thomasbuxton.towerhamlets.sch.uk/school-information/policies

Being a Parent Governor is a unique position on a governing body. The aim of this guidance is to offer advice to new parent governors on their specific role and to suggest ways of handling some of the tricky situations which may arise.

The role and responsibilities of parent governors are no different from those of other governors. Parent governors are not delegates and do not speak 'on behalf' of the parent body, but bring a parental perspective to the issues discussed. The main difference is that parents are elected to the board, not appointed (unless there are fewer candidates than vacancies).

As a parent governor it will sometimes feel that you have to know everything about the school, but can't talk about it; you have to be on everyone's side; people imagine that you have loads of free time.....and you have to be able to juggle all these expectations.

As a parent you will already be an expert juggler, but developing your role as a governor will take time. You are not alone! There is advice, help and support you can tap into....and reading this guidance note is the first step.

Parent governors are:	Parent governors are not:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ 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 governing body to communicate effectively with parents✓ equal in status to all other governors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ expected to gather the views of other parents and take them to the governing body;➤ simply expected to represent the interests of parents➤ a link between parents and the governing body➤ expected to vote as instructed by other parents.

What are the good bits about being a parent governor?

- ✓ You have a very privileged and responsible role.
- ✓ You have the opportunity to make a difference, not only for your children, but for children in years to come.

- ✓ You have the opportunity to make a difference for other parents, and to influence the way in which school works with them.
- ✓ You will learn a lot and develop new skills

How can you 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 governing body communicate with parents? Could you help them to improve links?
- ✓ How accessible is the school – how easy is it for parents to go into school to discuss things with the headteacher or teachers? Could you give feedback to help the school to be more open and welcoming?
- ✓ How accessible are 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? Could you encourage the governing body to be more visible?
- ✓ Learn how the school handles complaints and read the complaints policy. If another parent approaches you with a complaint, advise them to speak to the headteacher.
- ✓ Be approachable to other parents, but make sure you are clear about your role.
- ✓ Always represent the school positively.
- ✓ As a governor you are one of a group and must never act alone.
- ✓ Always support 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

Complaints

Parent governors are not there to provide an alternative route to addressing individual parental concerns, although if you do become aware of more widespread disquiet about the school's policy and practice then you should alert the Headteacher and/or Chair.

Sometimes a parent governor may be approached with a complaint. If a parent has a concern or complaint which is very specific to their child, you should, if approached, advise them to follow the

school procedure; do not get involved. It is not your role to hear the complaint details. They should try to resolve their concerns by speaking to the appropriate teacher or senior leader. If the parent remains dissatisfied with the outcome, suggest that they make an appointment to speak to the Headteacher.

You should guide parents regarding appropriate lines of action, making them aware of the school's complaints policy and procedures. If a parent raises issues of general concern with you, you should suggest that they make these known to the headteacher. Being a parent governor does not disqualify you from your usual rights as a parent, including making a complaint.

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.
- ✓ Don't raise expectations that the school will "put it right" – there may be underlying issues or background that you don't know about.
- ✓ Keep an open mind – there are at least two sides to every story!
- ✓ You may need to explain why the governing body has made a decision in a certain way, so be prepared. What to do if you experience a conflict between being a parent and being a governor This can happen – especially if you think the governing body is making decisions which you feel will adversely affect your child(ren).
- ✓ If you are concerned, talk to the headteacher or to the chair of governors.
- ✓ Make sure you don't break confidentiality when discussing your concerns outside governing body meetings.

Where to get help, advice and support

- ✓ From the headteacher.
- ✓ From other governors.
- ✓ From the chair of governors.
- ✓ From the clerk to the governing body.
- ✓ Ask for a governor mentor or "buddy" to help you through the first few months.
- ✓ Attend the induction training offered by the Local Authority (see the Governor Training Programme). Sessions run during the day and in the evenings to help you in your juggling act! You'll meet other new governors and will find lots of people who feel just the same as you.

Some do's and don'ts for parent governors

Communicate the parents' viewpoint

Bring your valuable knowledge and perspective to discussions. For example:

Do ask the headteacher "have parents been consulted on this issue? If not, why not?" or "what impact will this have on parents?"

Don't say "as a parent, I've spoken to other parents in the playground and we all think the school should do X"

Set expectations with other parents

You need to help other parents understand that you're not there to speak on their behalf, bring up their individual issues in meetings or solve problems for them.

Do get up to speed with your school's complaints procedure, as well as the staff list, so you can quickly tell them how and where to raise their issue

Do ask parents to put it in writing and follow the school's complaints procedure. This helps to separate genuine complaints from the customary grumbles

Do explain what the role of parent governor actually is. Learn a one-liner such as "parent governors don't speak 'on behalf' of the parent body, instead we bring a parental perspective to the strategic decisions the governors make"

Don't agree to raise it at the meeting or look into it for them - this will set a bad precedent and will cause problems later down the line as the right procedure hasn't been followed

You might also see comments about the school from parents on social media, perhaps in parent groups you've joined. It's not your role to get involved. Read our Facebook 'cheat sheet' for governors for advice on how to respond in these situations.

Separate your role as a governor from your role as a parent

Think about all pupils, not just your child. As a governor, you're responsible for the progress and wellbeing of all of the pupils at the school, so keep this at the forefront of your mind in meetings.

It may feel helpful to view issues through the lens of your own child, but as a governor, you must rely on a wide range of sources to make decisions and hold the headteacher to account.

When discussing issues in meetings:

Do remember that you're acting in the interests of the whole pupil body

Don't bring up your child, or refer to anecdotal evidence based only on your child's, or a friend's, experience