

Subject: Flourishing as an Ex Officio Clergy Foundation Governor

From: Belinda Copson, Governance Adviser

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For: Incumbents, governors and clerks (maintained schools, federations, single academy trusts)

Reference: GOV 1/23-24

FLOURISHING AS AN EX OFFICIO CLERGY FOUNDATION GOVERNOR

Context

Most maintained schools and federations in the Diocese of St Albans have an ex officio clergy foundation governor place on their governing board. Some single academy trusts have similar provision on the academy board. This role is usually filled by the parish priest, or occasionally another representative agreed by the Archdeacon.

Clergy often also have the role of 'school incumbent' – a regular link with the school which typically includes some involvement in collective worship, and being part of the school community in various ways as a pastoral presence. Most clergy with a church school in their parish combine the role of 'school incumbent' with also being an ex officio foundation governor.

What is the clergy's unique contribution to governance?

- Supporting the school's Christian ethos and articulating its Christian vision
- Fostering strong church/school links
- Bringing a pastoral perspective to governance
- Involvement with preparation for SIAMs inspections
- The interaction between the roles of clergy governor and school incumbent will give an understanding of the life of the school from more than one perspective.

Setting good boundaries as an ex officio clergy governor

- **Leadership**

The Board of Education would not normally expect the ex officio clergy governor to be Chair of Governors, other than in exceptional circumstances. Some clergy take on the role of Vice Chair, but this is not a requirement.

- **Major projects**

Clergy are not normally expected to lead the governing board on major projects (for example building projects, academisation) particularly if these are outside your sphere of expertise.

- **Governor recruitment**

Recruitment of foundation governors is a collective task of the governing board (in collaboration with the Parochial Church Council for places that the PCC appoints). The clergy governor is not expected to have sole responsibility for this. The Schools Team has guidance available on the practicalities of foundation governor recruitment and appointments.

- **Conflicts of interest**

Be aware of any potential conflicts of interest between your clergy pastoral role and your role as a governor (for example, in relation to any complaints to governors). The Schools Team can advise if needed.

- **Prioritise time**

Consider what time you can realistically give to governance meetings and tasks, and where you may need to prioritise. You may wish to discuss with your Chair of Governors. You are not expected to attend governor meetings on your regular day/s off or where meeting times clash with a regular parish responsibility, and you need not necessarily be at every meeting.

. How can the Diocesan Board of Education support you as a governor?

- Information, advice, resources. See below for points of contact and links to our online resources
- A listening ear - confidential conversations on governance matters if needed
- Very few clergy have time to be governors in more than one church school. We are always happy to discuss situations where an incumbent has multiple ex officio places for schools in their parish/benefice, and to help find realistic solutions where needed.

Points of contact

- Belinda Copson (Governance Adviser): Belinda leads on governance for the Schools Team - bcopson@stalbans.anglican.org; 07990 001071
- Vicki Barrière: Vicki is often first point of contact, and handles governance appointments for academies - ybarriere@stalbans.anglican.org; 01727 818170
- Donna Knight-Olds: Donna handles the administration for foundation governor appointments in maintained schools - dknight-olds@stalbans.anglican.org; 01727 818176

Online resources

[Governor training opportunities](#) (you can enter a search term in the first row of each termly table to filter events)

Guidance on the foundation governor role:

- [Foundation governors: ethos and core principles](#)
- [Foundation governors: key responsibilities](#)

Further information and resources are available on the diocesan website's [School Governance](#) page.