

Briefing

Subject: What to do when there is a clergy pastoral vacancy

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Date: 14/10/2019

For: Chairs of Governors, Headteachers, Incumbents
and Clerks to Governors

Reference: GC 1/19-20

WHAT TO DO WHEN THERE IS A CLERGY PASTORAL VACANCY

The following guidance is to assist you in maintaining strong school/church links during a pastoral vacancy.

The Schools Team is often asked if we can provide someone to offer support to schools during a pastoral vacancy. This involves the **school incumbent role**, (e.g. help with collective worship and other direct school involvement), and/or the **ex officio clergy governor role** (as an interim member of the governing board). These are two distinct roles, though they are often carried out by the same individual – usually the local incumbent or team vicar.

In a normal pastoral vacancy, the Board of Education is unable to provide people to take on the above roles. There are very few potential volunteers from outside a parish's own community who can offer this sort of interim help and the Schools Team has no bank of people to call on in this respect. This reflects a national picture of shortfall in filling governor places and in volunteering generally, and means that other approaches are needed locally.

Below are some suggested actions to explore locally during a vacancy, to ensure good church/school links are maintained.

School Incumbent interim support:

1. **Parish church:** Explore the resources of the local church. Particularly in team ministries, other clergy, Readers, or interested lay people may be able to help.
2. **Rural/area dean:** If the parish church cannot help, contact the rural/area dean. (Bear in mind that some deaneries may be carrying several clergy vacancies).
3. **Other churches:** If the local deanery is unable to support, you may wish to source help from other local Christian churches (members of Churches Together).
4. **SIAMS:** It would be legitimate to invite non-Anglican ministers into school to share how they have, during the pastoral vacancy, supported the school in the implementation and promotion of its local Christian vision for education. It would not be appropriate to expect

non-Church of England ministers to comment on or support the development of the school as a Church of England school.

Governance:

- **Long-term situations:** ex officio governor 'substitute' arrangements are normally reserved for when there are multiple church schools in a parish, or some other long-term situation. In these circumstances, please contact Belinda Copson (Governance Adviser) for advice.
- **In a normal pastoral vacancy:** some of the above advice for the school incumbent role could also apply to the governor role, but in reality 'bringing someone in' as an interim ex officio governor may be of limited value unless that person is already embedded in parish life and the local community. Appointing an interim from outside the parish requires formal approval from the relevant Archdeacon and should only be considered where an individual would bring appropriate skills to the governing board. Please contact the Governance Officer for advice.

Whether an interim ex officio governor is appointed or not, during the pastoral vacancy existing foundation governors should make active efforts to ensure that church/school links are maintained; for instance, by sending regular updates to the PCC, parish newsletter, etc. and maintaining contact with key church officers. Foundation governors should also engage in any preparation for SIAMS inspection.

Foundation Governor appointments: if during a pastoral vacancy or for other reasons the usual signatories for nomination forms are unavailable, please contact the Schools Team and we will advise on acceptable alternatives.

Further advice from:

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