

# Guidance for the Election of Parent Representatives in Controlled Schools



**RECONSTITUTION OF  
BOARDS OF GOVERNORS**

**TERM OF OFFICE  
(2018-2022)**

**EDUCATION AUTHORITY**  
**BOARDS OF GOVERNORS**  
**FOR THE TERM OF OFFICE 2018 - JUNE 2022**

**GUIDANCE FOR THE ELECTION OF PARENT REPRESENTATIVES IN CONTROLLED SCHOOLS**

The Department of Education's (DE) Circular No. 2017/20 parts 2 and 4 (*copy attached*) outlines the legal position and arrangements that would meet with DE approval governing the election of parent governors. (In law the term parent includes a guardian and every person who has the actual custody of the pupil).

Please refer to the governor membership category list within this pack for the number of parent representatives.

**A sample procedure, which you may wish to adopt, is detailed below.**

**A. INVITATION TO THE MEETING**

1. The board of governors should designate a person (*other than a parent*) to act as clerk to the election.

The clerk shall write to parents to invite them to a meeting to elect parent representatives (see attached governor membership category list) and explain the procedures to be used for nominating candidates and voting. A sample letter (*see appendix a*) and reply slip (*see appendix a1*) is attached. **Both** parents of each family from which a child is attending the school are entitled to attend and vote at the meeting. The clerk should ensure that a letter of invitation, reply slip, nomination forms (*see appendix b*) and *personal statement forms* (*see appendix b1*), together with an information leaflet on the roles and responsibilities of boards of governors (*appendix e*) are issued to parents **at least seven days** before the date of the meeting.

2. All eligible parents (parent governors must be elected by parents of pupils attending the school (or schools) at the time of the election from amongst the parents of such pupils) are entitled to be present, nominate candidates, to vote and to stand for election. Each parent, regardless of the number of his/her children in the school is entitled to vote for as many candidates as there are places to fill. Candidates are eligible to vote.
3. Please note, in accordance with the Scheme for the Management of Controlled Schools:

**Page 8 – Disqualification from Membership**

Paragraph 6 (1)

“ A person, other than the principal or a teacher elected in accordance with the relevant provisions of Schedule 4 to the 1986 Order, who

(a) is employed for gain solely in the school for the purposes of the school or, for the purposes of non-school activities;

shall **not** be a member of the board of governors of the school.

4. In the invitation it should be made clear that nominations for vacancies that exist must be proposed and seconded by **parents of children attending the school at the time of election**, and have the agreement of the nominated person(s).

The nominated person(s) should complete the enclosed personal statement as detailed in *appendix b1* in order to share their skills, knowledge and experience with parents at the meeting. All nomination forms and personal statements need not be made in advance of the meeting.

## **B. ADMISSION TO THE MEETING**

5. This meeting is a meeting of parents and the clerk should ensure that only parents are entitled to vote at the meeting.
6. Each school should in the light of its own circumstances determine a realistic quorum for the meeting, for example a quorum for a meeting to elect parent representative could be double the amount of parent representatives, i.e. if there are 2 representatives the quorum should be 4 parents present at the meeting.
7. In the event that there is not a quorum the meeting cannot proceed. The board of governors should decide what further steps it might reasonably take e.g. by arranging a postal vote (see point 14). In the event that this arrangement does not result in nomination(s) the clerk should contact the Education Authority for further advice.

## **C. PROCEDURE AT THE MEETING**

8. At the commencement of the meeting the clerk should normally act as chair, explain the purpose of the meeting and those present should be informed of the requisite number of parent representatives to be nominated at the meeting.
9. The chair should then inform those present of the nomination(s) received for parent representatives on the board of governors.

Parents who have been nominated should, prior to the voting process, introduce themselves and inform all present why they are interested in becoming a school governor, by outlining their range of knowledge, skills and experience and describing their commitment to the values and ethos of the school for example:

- **General Skills and Experience**  
e.g. human resource management and employment issues, planning and direction setting, health & safety, risk management, legal issues.

- **Financial/Numerical Skills and Experience**  
e.g. financial management such as accountancy, budgeting or auditing, the ability to understand and analyse data.
- **Services for Children and Young People**  
e.g. a commitment to improving education for all pupils, working or volunteering with children and young people, involvement with your community, knowledge or understanding of the education system in Northern Ireland or anything else they feel is relevant.
- **Other Skills and Experience**  
e.g. a willingness to learn and attend training, the ability to work as part of a team and take collective responsibility for decision making, communication skills.
- **Commitment to the Culture, Value and Ethos of the school**

Any questions with regard to the functions of the board of governors should be answered and all discussions ended before voting commences.

10. If the number of nominees is equal to, or less than, the number of places to be filled by parents, all candidates should be deemed to have been elected.
11. Where there are more nominees than places to be filled, a ballot shall be carried out using the sample ballot paper. (*appendix c*) If tellers are appointed, they may themselves vote but should not be candidates. The candidates should be invited to scrutinise the count. A simple majority should determine the successful candidate(s).
12. Where a ballot results in a tie, a further ballot may be held involving only those candidates involved in the tie. If this second ballot also produces a tie then the result should be determined by lot.
13. Where the number of parents standing for election as a parent representative is less than the number of vacancies, please contact the Education Authority for further advice.
14. If the election is to be conducted by post, the clerk should first examine all nominations received and confirm that those parents who have been nominated are prepared to stand. If the number of nominees is equal to, or fewer than, the number of places to be filled, all candidates should be deemed to have been elected, without the need for a vote.

Where there are more nominees than places to be filled, a postal ballot should be held. The requisite number of ballot papers should be prepared and validated, e.g. by impression or distinctive endorsement of the school stamp. Each eligible parent should receive one ballot paper together with explanatory notes. A final date for the return of votes should be indicated and candidates invited to scrutinise the count. Meanwhile, the completed ballot papers should be held securely. A simple majority should determine the successful candidate(s).

## D. RETURNS

15. Within seven days after the meeting the clerk must complete and return the form of report which is enclosed (*appendix d*) to the appropriate Education Authority office detailed in E19.
16. The clerk should retain a report of the meeting, together with nomination forms and voting slips in accordance with the school's disposal of records schedule.

## E. GENERAL

17. In order to encourage the attendance of parents, the meeting should be well publicised and might be arranged to coincide with another event that is open to all parents.
18. It is understood that on some occasions prior to previous elections, ballot papers have been sent home with the pupils. This is not a satisfactory practice and it is therefore recommended that the ballot papers should either be handed directly to the parents, i.e. at a meeting, or posted to them. Once completed, the election papers should be sealed and either hand delivered by the parents or returned to the school by post.
19. Please return relevant paperwork to the appropriate office.

<b>Antrim Office</b>	<b>Karen White</b> , Education Authority, Antrim Office, 17 Lough Rd, Antrim BT41 4DH
<b>Armagh Office</b>	<b>Lorraine Livingstone</b> , Education Authority, Armagh Office 3 Charlemont Place, The Mall, Armagh BT61 9AX
<b>Belfast/Dundonald Office</b>	<b>Paula Maguire</b> , Education Authority, Belfast Office, 40 Academy Street, Belfast, BT1 2NQ
<b>Omagh Office</b>	<b>Teresa McCrory</b> , Education Authority, Omagh Office, 1 Hospital Road, Omagh, BT79 OAW

EDUCATION AUTHORITY

NOMINATION OF PARENT REPRESENTATIVES TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS FOR THE TERM OF OFFICE 2018 - 2022

\_\_\_\_\_ SCHOOL/COLLEGE/ACADEMY

Dear Parent

You are invited to attend a meeting of parents of pupils in attendance at the above school, to be held in the school/college/academy on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ am/pm. Please complete the enclosed reply slip to indicate if you will/will not be attending the meeting.

The purpose of the meeting is to elect parent representatives to the board of governors for the term of office 2018 – 2022. The board of governors is an important body responsible for various aspects of the management of the school. Attached is an information leaflet on the roles and responsibilities of board of governors (*appendix e*).

The following points should be noted:

1. **both** parents of each pupil attending the school are entitled to be present and to vote at the meeting;
2. each parent is entitled to **one** vote only in respect of each vacancy;
3. the board of governors has appointed me to act as clerk of the election and chair at the meeting. A report of the proceedings will be forwarded to the appropriate Education Authority office;
4. should you wish to nominate a person(s) as parent representative(s), please use the nomination forms provided with this invitation. After obtaining a seconder (**who must be a parent of a child at the school**) and the agreement of the candidate (along with their personal statement) (*appendix b1*) you should return the forms to me not later than \_\_\_\_\_

5. please note, in accordance with the Scheme for the Management of Controlled Schools:

*a person, other than the principal or a teacher elected in accordance with the relevant provisions of Schedule 4 to the 1986 Order, who is employed for gain solely in the school for the purposes of the school or, for the purposes of non-school activities shall **not** be a member of the board of governors of the school.*

I would encourage all parents to play an active part in school life and hope you will be able to attend this important meeting.

Yours faithfully

Clerk of the Election



**NOMINATION FORM**

**EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

**ELECTION OF PARENT REPRESENTATIVES TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS FOR  
THE TERM OF OFFICE 2018 - 2022**

\_\_\_\_\_ **SCHOOL/COLLEGE/ACADEMY**

We, the undersigned, propose and second \_\_\_\_\_ as parent representative on the Board of Governors for the term of office 2018 – 2022.

Name(s) of pupil(s)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (**Proposer**, Parent)

\_\_\_\_\_

Contact Telephone No: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (**Seconder**, Parent)

\_\_\_\_\_

Contact Telephone No: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to stand for election to the Board of Governors:

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Nominee)

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Telephone No: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this **Nomination Form** and the **Nominee's personal statement** to the Clerk not later than \_\_\_\_\_

### PARENT NOMINATION – PERSONAL STATEMENT

#### SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

*Please tell us about your knowledge, skills or experience below. You do not have to complete all the boxes.*

1. **General Skills and Experience:** e.g. human resource management and employment issues, planning and direction setting, health & safety, risk management, legal issues.

2. **Financial/Numerical Skills and Experience:** e.g. financial management such as accountancy, budgeting or auditing, the ability to understand and analyse data.

3. **Services for Children and Young People:** e.g. a commitment to improving education for all pupils, working or volunteering with children and young people, involvement with your local community, knowledge or understanding of the education system in Northern Ireland or anything else you feel is relevant.

4. **Other Skills and Experience:** e.g. a willingness to learn and attend training, the ability to work as part of a team and take collective responsibility for decision making, communication skills.

**Tell us briefly why you are interested in becoming a school governor, describe your commitment to the culture, values and ethos of the school.**

**School Name** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Ballot Paper for Parent Governor Election**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

There are \_\_\_ candidates for \_\_\_ vacancies for parent governors on the Board of Governors and it is therefore necessary to hold a ballot.

You may vote for up to \_\_\_ candidates. Please put an “X” in the box next to your preferred candidates. If you vote for more than \_\_\_ candidates your votes will be invalidated and will not be counted.

**VOTE FOR UP TO \_\_\_ CANDIDATES ONLY.** Not more than one vote can be given to any ONE candidate.

1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		

**Note:**

As per point 6 of the DE Election of Parent and Teacher Members of Boards of Governors (December 2017), each parent is entitled to vote for as many candidates as there are places to be filled e.g. if there are 2 parent governor places parents can vote for two candidates but not more than one vote can be given to any one candidate.

EDUCATION AUTHORITY

ELECTION OF PARENT REPRESENTATIVES TO BOARD OF GOVERNORS FOR THE TERM OF OFFICE 2018 - 2022

REPORT OF MEETING OF PARENTS OF CHILDREN IN ATTENDANCE

AT \_\_\_\_\_ SCHOOL/COLLEGE/ACADEMY

**PART A** *(To be completed only if the meeting held was quorate)*

I hereby report as follows:

- (a) a meeting of the parents of children attending the above school/college/academy was held as follows:

**Place:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

- (b) there were \_\_\_\_ parents present, this number constituting a quorum.

- (c) the following parents were elected (complete as appropriate):

1) **Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ 2) **Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Postcode:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Postcode:** \_\_\_\_\_

3) **Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ 4) **Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Postcode:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Postcode:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please note that (apart from the principal and teacher representatives) parents who are employed in the school or for the purposes of non school activities shall not be a member of the board of governors.**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **(chair/clerk)**

In their own interests and in case of subsequent disputes as to the validity of the proceedings at the parents' meeting, clerks are strongly advised to keep detailed notes of the proceedings, including notes on such matters as:

- (a) names and addresses of all persons proposed as parent representatives, with the names of the proposer and seconder in each case, and the voting;
- (b) the number of votes cast for each nominee; and
- (c) a record of any decision made by lot.

## **PART B**

**(To be completed only if the meeting could not be held as it was not quorate)**

I hereby report as follows:

- (a) that a meeting of the parents of children attending the above school/college/academy was duly called as follows:

**Place:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

- (b) that the meeting was not held as it was not quorate, the number necessary for a quorum being \_\_\_\_ and there being only \_\_\_\_ person(s) present.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **(clerk)** **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return this form to the appropriate Education Authority office.**

<b>Antrim Office</b>	<b>Karen White</b> , Education Authority, Antrim Office, 17 Lough Rd, Antrim BT41 4DH
<b>Armagh Office</b>	<b>Lorraine Livingstone</b> , Education Authority, Armagh Office, 3 Charlemont Place, The Mall, Armagh BT61 9AX
<b>Belfast/Dundonald Office</b>	<b>Paula Maguire</b> , Education Authority, Belfast Office, 40 Academy Street, Belfast, BT1 2NQ
<b>Omagh Office</b>	<b>Teresa McCrory</b> , Education Authority, Omagh Office, 1 Hospital Road, Omagh, BT79 0AW

### EDUCATION AUTHORITY

#### ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF BOARDS OF GOVERNORS

The implementation of the Education Reform Order (NI) 1989 increased the responsibilities of boards of governors, and these now cover an extremely wide range of roles and functions. The board of governors is responsible for the implementation of policy decisions covering a wide range of educational and professional issues. The undernoted is by no means an exhaustive listing of the main responsibilities of boards of governors, but is indicative of the main responsibilities and functions to be covered.

The following responsibilities are carried out in conjunction with, and with the approval of the Education Authority:

- (a) **Curriculum** - ultimately the board of governors is responsible for ensuring that the statutory curriculum is delivered and that the quality of education provided by the school, including the assistance given to the development of pupils, is satisfactory.
- (b) **Employment** - the Education Authority is the statutory employers of teaching and non-teaching staff. Boards of governors have the primary role to ensure that the normal employment matters are addressed at school level. These include:
  - a) Appointments and Promotions
  - b) Discipline and Grievance Management
  - c) Development of Staff
  - d) Health and Safety
- (c) **Enrolments and Admissions** - the board of governors is required to determine the admissions criteria which will be applied by the school in considering applications from parents/guardians, taking into account the communities served by the school.

Additionally, the board of governors may be required to develop a number of strategies to promote the school in order to secure a satisfactory level of admission.

- (d) **Pastoral Care** - the board of governors is required to ensure that the individual school policies meet the needs of pupils attending the school. When necessary, it will be the responsibility of the board of governors to ensure that the Discipline Policy is applied and where necessary, the Suspension and Expulsion Scheme applied.
- (e) **Financial Management** - the implementation of the LMS Scheme by the Education Authority devolves to governors' responsibility for the financial management of the school in accordance with procedures and guidelines determined by the Education Authority. The board of governors also has responsibility for developing and implementing a Salary Policy.
- (f) **Annual Reports** - under Article 125 and 126 of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989 it is the responsibility of the board of governors to prepare an Annual Report.
- (g) **School Development Plans** - the board of governors shall prepare, and from time to time revise, a School Development Plan, considering any guidance given by the

Department of Education, the Education Authority and (in the case of a Catholic Maintained School) the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools. Consideration must also be given to the findings of any inspection of the school.

- (h) Pupil Discipline** - the board of governors shall ensure that policies designed to promote good behaviour and discipline on the part of its pupils are pursued at the school and to make, and from time to time review, a written statement of general principles.
- (i) Pupil Suspension and Expulsion** - the board of governors shall ensure that a scheme prepared by the Education Authority, specifying the procedure to be followed in relation to the suspension or expulsion of pupils from the school and ensure that such a scheme is implemented when necessary. The board of governors shall also assist the principal in such a manner as is reasonably necessary to enable him/her to control the internal organisation, management and discipline of the school and provide the principal with such opportunity as may be necessary to enable him/her to express his/her opinion and to make his/her recommendations to the board of governors on all matters connected with the school.

The above responsibilities are extensive. As all governors give of their time voluntarily it is appropriate that in fulfilling the main responsibilities boards of governors delegate responsibility to the principal and the senior management team of the school for the completion of much of the work. Boards of governors receive the support, training, advice and guidance from officers of the Education Authority.

Useful Reference: Every School a Good School (ESaGS) at  
[www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk)