

Extract from “The Key for School Governors”

The parent governor role: in summary

- 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)

To see the full list of the responsibilities and duties that parent governors are expected to do, take a look at our [governor and trustee role descriptions](#).

Communicate the parents' viewpoint

Although you're not there to speak on behalf of parents, you can use your status as a parent to help the board understand parents' views and remind everyone to factor the parent community into discussions.

Understanding parents' opinion helps the board to make good decisions and helps guarantee that there is a link between governance and the parent community. You can read more about this in the [Governance Handbook](#) (page 16).

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.

Be polite but firm, and tell them to stick to the official channels.

For example, if another parent approaches you at the school gate with a grievance:

- **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. These include high-quality, objective data and the views of many stakeholders including pupils, staff, parents and the community. This is set out in the Governance Handbook (page 9).

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

Follow the complaints procedure

If you have a complaint concerning your child, follow the school's complaints procedure as any other parent would. If possible, ask the other parent to lead the discussion with the school. In all communication during the process, clarify that you're acting as a parent not a governor.

You could take action as a governor if the complaint affects more children than your own child - for example, if the data shows a wider problem with pupil progress in your child's year group, ask questions in the relevant meetings like:

- What support is in place for underperforming members of staff?
- How does the school help all children who are falling behind?

Read this article for more guidance on [governors making complaints about the school](#).

Avoid conflicts of interest

Most of the time, you won't need to declare a personal interest in all agenda items that could have an impact on your child. You should do this where:

- The matter would affect your child individually (an exclusions panel where your child was the victim of a behaviour incident, for example)
- You feel too close to the matter to be impartial

Where there is a dispute about whether you should withdraw, the other governors may make this decision. Read more guidance on conflicts of interest [here](#).

If you have concerns over a governing board decision

Again, remember to keep the roles separate.

If you have a concern:

- **Do** raise it in a governing board meeting. Meetings are designed for this purpose; governors can openly discuss decisions the governing board might take, and governors can express disagreement by voting against it
- **Do** respect the decision taken by the board if it's been voted on properly, and be united with your fellow governors
- **Do** ask for a meeting with the chair to discuss a decision in more detail if you wish
- **Don't** express your disagreement outside governing board meetings
- **Don't** involve other parents or seek to mobilise them in any way

<https://schoolgovernors.thekeysupport.com/the-governing-body/constitution-and-membership/governing-body-constitution/parent-governor-trustee-roles-and-responsibilities/>