



Become a School Governor in London

GUIDANCE FOR UNIVERSITY STAFF AND STUDENTS

Have you thought of becoming a school governor? Many university staff have such a responsibility already, often because of their interest in the quality of their child's school experience. But you do not need to have a child at school to become a governor. University staff and undergraduates and postgraduates can bring their valuable knowledge of contemporary higher education (HE) to the school's governing body.

Governors help to ensure that knowledge remains fresh across the school and HE sectors during important discussions of future strategy.

This leaflet helps you to find out more about becoming a governor in one of **London's 400+ state secondary schools or 1,800+ primary schools**. It grows out of the 'SHELL' project (School - HE Links in London) which seeks to strengthen school-university partnership working across London.

We begin with some questions and answers, and then provide links to useful websites.



WHAT DO SCHOOL GOVERNORS DO?

School governors work closely with the headteacher with whom they share the task of promoting pupil achievement. They can help to raise school standards in three ways:

- 1 Setting strategic direction, objectives and policies
- 2 Approving the school budget and reviewing progress
- 3 Appointing, challenging and supporting the headteacher

WHO CAN BECOME A SCHOOL GOVERNOR?

There are some 300,000 across England. Anyone aged 18 or over can apply. There is no upper age limit. There are no formal qualifications, although governors will be encouraged to participate in training sessions. Governing bodies will seek a range of experience and aptitudes across their members. Governors receive no payment, but might have their travel expenses reimbursed.

WHAT BENEFITS MIGHT I BRING TO A GOVERNING BODY?

Nizam Uddin (inset) is the past president of ULU, the University of London Student's Union and a governor of Langdon Park Secondary School in Tower Hamlets. He says: *'Being a school governor provides me with the opportunity to truly give something back to the community where I was raised and educated. It enables me to promote aspirations among even younger students.'*



What you bring to the governing body will vary. Current and recent university students know about the range of courses that school and college students might consider, university teaching styles and student living.

“...the opportunity to truly give something back to the community”

NIZAM UDDIN

Academic staff will be knowledgeable about their subject and the careers that graduates pursue. Administrative and students' union staff will have a wide range of knowledge about many aspects of university organisation and living.

Governors also benefit. The School Governors' One-Stop Shop (SGOSS) suggests that 'school governors will learn new skills'



WHAT TIME COMMITMENT IS INVOLVED?

Being a governor is likely to require about 6-8 hours a month during school terms, comprising full governing body meetings, participating in one of the supporting committees (such as finance, curriculum, HR), and including preparation time. Employers may give time off in lieu. Terms of office are generally four years, although governors are free to resign at any stage of their appointment.

Primary school governing bodies usually meet close to the end of the school day. Meetings in secondary schools are generally in the evening.

DO UNIVERSITIES HELP STAFF AND STUDENTS WHO TAKE ON A GOVERNOR ROLE?

In some cases, yes. Several universities have begun to gather details of staff involvement as governors. Help can be in the form of acknowledging the time commitment involved, or forming a self-help network of governors to share their experiences. Some examples are given in the SHELL report 'Higher Education involvement in school governance'.

Download the SHELL report here:

www.londonhigher.ac.uk/SHELLGovernance.html



If you become a school governor, it might be worthwhile telling your HE institution's outreach or schools' liaison staff and to consider if it would be helpful to share experiences with others in your institution including the students' union.

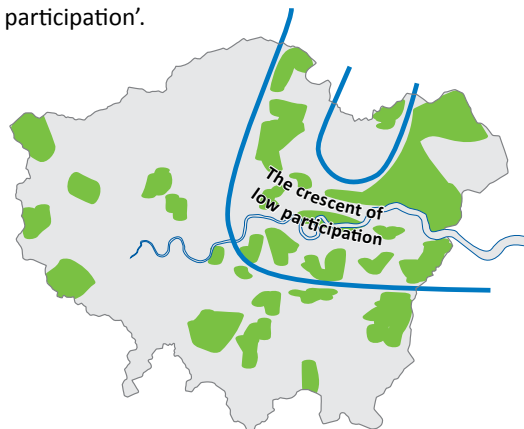
WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF SCHOOL GOVERNOR?

The governing body will usually comprise several types of governor – parents, staff, local authority appointees, community governors and, in schools of a religious character, foundation governors. Universities supporting the creation of academies and trusts nominate sponsor governors.

WHERE IN LONDON IS PROGRESSION TO HIGHER EDUCATION WEAKEST?

New school governors from the HE sector will be welcome throughout London. However you might consider especially the parts of London where young people are less likely to progress to higher education.

On the Greater London map below, based on HEFCE POLAR2 participation data (for 2000-04 student cohorts), inner and east London is characterised as the 'crescent of low participation'.



Area with two lowest quintiles of participation in higher education



HOW DO I APPLY TO BECOME A SCHOOL GOVERNOR? THREE EASY WAYS:

1 Apply through the 'School Governors' One-Stop Shop' (SGOSS)

SGOSS is an independent charity that recruits volunteers to serve on governing bodies across England (including London). SGOSS can advise on vacancies that are available in an area that is convenient for you.

Go to:

www.sgoos.org.uk/volunteers



Telephone:

020 7354 9805



2 Apply directly to a school that interests you

There might be a link on the school website, or enquire at the school office.

3 Apply through a local authority

The education pages of London's 33 local authorities usually have an easy-to-find link to governance pages.

These can be accessed at:

www.cms.lgfl.net/web/igfl/las/links



USEFUL LINKS



ON BECOMING A SCHOOL GOVERNOR:

➔ School Governors' One-Stop Shop (SGOSS)

Practical advice at: www.sgoos.org.uk

➔ Department for Education

Details of governance at: www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/governance

➔ Directgov

The organisation of schools is described at:

www.direct.gov.uk/en/parents/schoolslearninganddevelopment



Download this SHELL leaflet from
www.londonhigher.ac.uk/SHELLGovernance.html

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