**Incumbents as Ex Officio Foundation Governors & Clergy Appointments**

***Incumbents as Ex Officio Foundation Governors***

Context

In virtually every diocese in the country the local incumbent is an ex officio Foundation Governor on the governing board of the local church school. The expectation is that clergy will serve as Foundation Governors or find someone suitable from their congregation who can be nominated in their place.

This is not the case in Peterborough Diocese where there are many clergy who do not serve on church school governing boards. The previous Bishop of Peterborough recognised that:

• Some clergy are more suited to the up-front provision of collective worship, lunchtime clubs and after school activities, rather than the duties of a school governor.

• In multi-parish benefices there may be several church schools and the incumbent may not have the time to offer worship, clubs and activities in all schools in addition to being a school governor in the church schools.

Consequently, our previous Bishop removed the expectation that all clergy would serve as ex officio Foundation Governors.

Diocesan Board of Education’s current view

However, the DBE now views this as a missed opportunity. Every Church of England school needs to develop a theologically rooted vision and to apply this theology to all aspects of school life; clergy are well placed to advise on these matters.

67 of our 103 schools in Peterborough Diocese are now academies, where the academy trust board is accountable and responsible for all matters related to HR, finance, performance data, curriculum design and pedagogy. Therefore, clergy serving as governors in these academies would not be drawn into HR or employment matters, which they might feel could compromise their pastoral role with staff. Similarly, specialist educational competencies related to teaching, the curriculum, finance and data would not be required in these local governance roles. In fact, there are only 14 voluntary aided schools left in the Diocese, where governors are the direct employers of the staff and responsible for all aspects of each school’s provision.

Local governance in most multi-academy trusts is much more focused on local community engagement, partnership with the local church and all matters related to SIAMS (the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools), and is well suited to clergy skills and expertise.

The term of office for a member of clergy is open-ended, not limited to 4 years. A church member appointment is limited to the usual 4-year term of office, which is renewable by application.

It is not normally recommended that an incumbent should become a Chair of Governors, in view of the workload and potential conflict of interests, unless in exceptional circumstances. This would particularly apply to being the Chair of an academy trust or a voluntary aided school, where the governors are the employers of staff. Serving on the local governing board of a school in a multi-academy trust or in a voluntary controlled school though (i.e. in the majority of our schools; 85/103), where governors are not the direct employers of staff, would help avoid HR / pastoral conflicts of interest.

Training requirement

The training requirement of attending a Roles & Responsibilities of a Church School Governor before appointment and one additional course within a 4-year term apply in both cases though. All Foundation Governors are required to attend, before taking up their appointment, the training course *Roles and Responsibilities of a Church School Governor,* plus one additional course during a 4-year term.

The proposal is that, following discussion with the Bishop, the DBE and Bishop’s Leadership Team, and consultation with local clergy, church schools and academy trusts would be advised to:

• Modify their instrument of government or MAT scheme of delegation re. local governance, to ensure the local incumbent is automatically offered an ex officio position as a Foundation Governor / Church Governor OR

• Make provision for the clergy to nominate a church member to take up this position on their behalf when this would be more appropriate.

***Clergy Appointments***

It would also be helpful if the DBE formally affirmed and communicated the importance of:

1. Church schools being asked to contribute to each Benefice Profile when recruiting new incumbents

2. All schools in a parish being included in the advert for the post.

3. There being a tour of the school on the interview day, which includes an interview with the students’ council, whenever interviews take place in term time.

4. A headteacher being included in the interview process. This could be meeting candidates at the school and being invited to lunch on interview day.

These interview day opportunities already take place in many benefices. However, a statement from the DBE stating the importance of these simple steps would underline the importance of each church school to the ministry in every benefice.

*Diocesan Board of Education*

*April 2025*