EBOR ACADEMY TRUST
Be a School Governor

Being a governor draws you in to thinking about how and why schools work well, and how – without being hands-on – you can use your experience and life skills to support and challenge the people working in them to be as effective as possible. In retirement, after a working lifetime in secondary education, I was looking for a new challenge, and took up the opportunity to become a primary school governor. This was a learning curve for me, as I knew very little about primary, and I thought it would be really interesting.

In fact, it was more interesting and intellectually stimulating than I could ever have imagined, as the school began its journey towards becoming an academy within what was then a trust of two schools, but has since become the thriving Ebor Academy Trust, with more than 20 schools. Being part of that journey, and seeing the important supporting role that a team of governors play in working with school leaders in bringing about much-needed improvement, is truly rewarding.

The one phrase that I was quite clear I should never use in governors' meetings was: *'In my school, we used to...'* – being a governor is about learning how things work in a different setting and looking at the big picture as well as the details. And being a governor of an academy within a growing trust is about being involved in finding new and creative solutions to old problems. Probably the most important thing a governor can do to support the school is to ask questions – big or small – at meetings. This is the way that shared solutions continue to develop.

The great thing about being a governor in a successful academy trust is that you know there is a really strong central support team to help your academy, whether with school improvement, finance, IT or a host of other issues. There are also fantastic opportunities for learning from other academies within the Trust, and nobody gets set in their ways.

RACHEL TOTTON

Rise to the challenge: be a school governor with Ebor Academy Trust

Being a school governor is a challenging but hugely rewarding role.

It will give you the chance to make a positive impact on the lives of children and young people, develop your skills in a board-level environment, and give something back to your local community. You will also be joining the largest volunteer force in the country – there are over a quarter of a million volunteers governing state funded schools in England.

Ebor Academy Trust operates over 20 schools across York, Selby, the East Riding and The Humber and on the Yorkshire Coast. We are a mixed multi-academy trust, which means we comprise community schools and Church of England schools. We're always on the lookout for people keen to work with our schools to both support and challenge the way they work, to enrich the learning experience of our children.

Schools need governing boards that have a balance and diversity of knowledge, skills and experience to enable it to be effective. Ofsted (the national inspection body for schools) has repeatedly noted that the most effective schools demonstrate effective leadership and management – including by the governing board.

Anyone aged over 18 can be a governor and you do not need to be a parent. There is no requirement for you to have a formal understanding of the education system, just an enquiring mind, the ability to work as part of a team and the time to contribute. There is plenty of training available.

Schools need and benefit from a range of professional knowledge on their governing board including education, finance, human resources, legal, marketing and public relations, property and estates management, and organisational change.

What governors do and what's expected

As a governor, you will be able to:

- Use your own experiences of life beyond school to inform conversations
- Develop and utilise your skills in a board-level environment
- Support and challenge the school so that it improves for pupils and staff

What governors do?

The governing body provides strategic leadership and accountability in schools. It has three key functions:

- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent
- Holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils
- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction

Governors monitor and evaluate the progress the school is making and act as a source of challenge and support to the headteacher.

Governors must be prepared to adopt the Nolan principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

They should also be committed to their role and to young people; confident in having courageous conversations; curious with an enquiring mind; able to challenge the status quo to improve things; collaborative to build relationships; critical to improve their own work and that of the board; and creative in problem solving and being innovative.

What will be expected of me?

The average time commitment is five to eight hours per month, although it will vary depending on the needs of the school and the role. This includes meetings, background reading and school visits.

Like magistrates or members of a jury, school governors and trustees have a right to reasonable time off work for their public duties, although this may be unpaid. Your company's HR department will be able to tell you about its policy.

Each school sets a term of office for its governors and trustees – this is normally four years. Many people choose to serve multiple terms, however as a volunteer you can resign before your term is finished if your circumstances change.

Remember, governance is a voluntary role and therefore it is not paid.

I joined the governing body in 2012 after having a strong interest in how the school runs outside of the classroom.

I have been on committees such as assessment, school improvement, health and safety, and finance and have developed a good understanding of many aspects of school.

It is also great continuous professional development for me and gives another perception of the school, which is different to my job as a class teacher.

AMY HUNTER

I became a school governor because I was asked!

I am a HR professional and the chair of governors recognised that I had a useful skillset. We were new to both the area and to school life so it was a win-win.

Becoming a governor helped me integrate quickly into the local community, practise my HR skills in a different environment (great for my CV) and support the school.

Over the past four years, we've gone from Requires Improvement to Good, joined Ebor Academy Trust, and welcomed a new headteacher. I've been an integral part of those achievements, which gives me a huge sense of pride.

JACKIE CHIPLIN

I became a Governor at Ebor Academy Filey because I am passionate about education and want to use my skills and experience to help it achieve great things for its pupils.

I work as a university lecturer and I feel that being a governor has given me a better understanding of the education system and has had an impact on how I work with young people coming into university.

I particularly enjoy my visits to the school and I am always interested in seeing the young people's work and discussing it with them. I always leave the school feeling proud that I am associated with Ebor Academy Filey.

GEOFFREY PROUDLOCK

Get involved

If you're interested in finding out more about becoming a school governor with Ebor Academy Trust, email Business Support Manager Julie Forde **j.forde@ebor.academy** or call Julie for an informal discussion on 01904 553404.

EBOR ACADEMY TRUST

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