

Dear Parent and Carers

My name is Sam Tompkins and I'm one of the vice chairs on the governing body for Tor Bridge Primary and Cann Bridge schools, known as the federation.

As you may be aware, the governing body has recently restructured and this has left us with some vacancies that we need to fill, so I am writing to you today to ask for your help. We would like **you** to consider becoming part of the governing team.

Being a governor is an exciting role, which can be challenging at times, however, it's highly rewarding and satisfying. Also, skills development via formal governor training is available from Plymouth City Council free of charge.

To be a governor, you don't need to have a background in education or even a child at the school, you just need to want to make a positive contribution to young peoples education, aspirations and life chances. You need to be over 18 and there are no tests or formal interviews to go through. If you're employed, your boss may even give you paid time off to perform your duties.

The existing governors come from all walks of life and are passionate about both schools. We really need like-minded, positive, enthusiastic people who can spare some time each month, coming to meetings and visiting the schools. We know that being a new governor can be a daunting experience but we ensure that adequate mentoring, training and support is available to guide you into the role.

So you know who we all are, there is a who's who with this letter. If you're interested and would like to chat through any questions or find out what life as a governor is like, we are eager to talk to you. We can meet in the playground or over a coffee at school to suit you. Alternatively you can always email us via receptionprimary@torbridge.net

In order for the governing body to be effective we really do need **you** to fill our vacancies, so please get in touch.

We hope to speak to you soon.



COULD YOU BE A GOVERNOR?

Who are governors and what do they do?

Governors are people who want to make a positive contribution to young people's education, aspirations and life chances. As a governor, you will join the largest voluntary force in the country and have a vital role in raising school standards through three key roles:-

- **Setting vision, ethos and strategic direction**– Governing bodies are the key strategic decision-making body of every school. It is their role to set the school's strategic framework and to ensure all statutory duties are met.
- **Holding the headteacher to account** – Governing bodies should play a strategic role, focusing strongly on holding the headteacher to account and avoiding being drawn into direct involvement in operational matters.
- **Overseeing Financial Performance** – Governing bodies are responsible for making sure their school's money is well spent. They should do this by making sure they have at least one governor with specific skills and experience of financial matters.

The governing body has the overall responsibility for the way the school is run and needs to promote the highest standards of achievement for its pupils. Ofsted's role upon inspection is to review how well leaders, managers and governors pursue excellence. The governing body holds a school to account, and monitors the effectiveness of its policies, vision and aims throughout the year. The body both supports and challenges the leadership team.

As a governor you will not act alone – you are part of a governing body which may delegate certain tasks to small groups of governors. Ofsted will look to the governing body to demonstrate effective leadership and management. The time commitment varies but often there are approximately 4-5 governing body meetings per year with the expectation that governors will also contribute to one committee, visits to the site and training and self-development.

There are different groups of governors including parents, staff and co-opted governors but all will share the same vision and aims.

There are no specific qualifications or requirements other than a willingness to commit time to the school or college and to work with others. However, it is always helpful to have people on the governing body who have business knowledge, financial skills, people skills or problem solving skills.

You will need to be reliable and have integrity – you will often be aware of confidential and sensitive information and it is crucial this is handled correctly. You will need to commit time to prepare for meetings by reading papers and documents and allow time to visit the school to see learning in action. Under employment rights governors are entitled to reasonable time off to carry out duties. What constitutes 'reasonable' time off has to be agreed on between a governor and their employer. An employer may give time off with pay but doesn't have to.

Regulations do set out reasons why someone cannot be a governor as there are a few circumstances which would disqualify an individual – these include insolvency, specific criminal records or being banned from working with children. A list will be provided to you when you apply. All governors will be required to undertake an enhanced criminal records check.

Governing bodies are supported by a clerk to governors who will assist new governors gain information about the school. The Chair of Governors will ensure new governors are supported and that a mentor is offered. Training is recommended for all governors and as well as an Induction course governors can access governor training on a range of subjects including accountability, understanding data, HR issues, teaching and learning, health and safety, Ofsted and working together to name but a few. Indeed, the local Governor Development Team offers over 50 courses a year which can be accessed in the early evening, as twilight or day sessions. Training allows all governors the opportunity to meet other governors across the city and network.

Being a school governor is very rewarding. Whilst voluntary, you carry out an important role in ensuring children and young people get the best opportunities and you will gain personally in skills and knowledge from being a governor.