



LONDON BOROUGH OF REDBRIDGE

GUIDELINES FOR THE CONDUCT OF PARENT GOVERNOR ELECTIONS

A The Statutory Framework

1 Definition of Parent Governor

- 1.1 An elected parent governor is a person who is elected as a member of the governing body of the school and who is himself/herself such a parent at the time he/she is elected. "Parent" is defined in section 114 of the Education Act 1944 in the following terms:**

"Parent", in relation to any child or young person, includes a guardian and every person who has the actual custody of the child or young person.

- 1.2 Any person who has the care of the child, even if that person is not the birth parent of the child and even if that person has no parental responsibility for the child is to be regarded as a parent. This includes parents of children in the school's nursery. However it does not include parents/carers who only have children attending the children's centre attached to the school.**

- 1.3 A person is disqualified from election or appointment as a parent governor of a school if he/she is an elected member of the LA or if he/she works at the school for more than 500 hours (i.e. for more than one third of the hours of a full time equivalent) in a school year (at the time of election or appointment).**

- 1.4 Regulations 5 to 8 and 15 shall have effect for the purpose of prescribing the circumstances and cases in which a person is to be disqualified for holding, or continuing to hold, office as a governor of a school and the circumstances and cases so prescribed shall be the only circumstances and cases in which a person is to be disqualified for holding, or continuing to hold, office as such a governor.**

2 Delegation of Authority

- 2.1 The 'responsible authority' is used to refer to those responsible for the organisation of parent governor elections. In the case of community, voluntary controlled or maintained special schools this is the Local**

Authority. In the case of aided or special agreement schools the 'responsible authority is the governing body.

- 2.2 The LEA has delegated the responsibility for the conduct and arrangement of parent governor elections to the Head teacher who acts as the 'Returning Officer'. In the case of linked primary schools, the Head teachers of the Infants and Junior schools are responsible jointly for the election. The constituency for the elections should be that of both schools.

B Conduct of elections

3 Pre-election Publicity

- 3.1 The regulations state that "where a vacancy arises, the appropriate authority (the school) must take such steps as are reasonably practicable to secure that every person who is known to them to be a parent of a registered pupil at the school is:

- a) informed of the vacancy and that it is required to be filled by election
- b) informed that s/he is entitled to stand as candidate and vote in the election
- c) given the opportunity to do so".

Schools must choose to notify parents that a vacancy exists and through their newsletter or website, invite interested parents to request more information. The method chosen will depend on the usual communication channels used by the school, for example if a school has an established routine with parents using a website to pass on information then advertising the vacancy via the website would be acceptable.

Schools do not have to issue copies of the leaflet previously supplied by the Governors Support Team "Why not become a parent governor?"

4 Nominations

- 4.1 When a vacancy arises, nominations should be invited as soon as possible. Governors Support Service should be informed of the vacancy. (Annex A and B – Nomination Letter and Form)
- 4.2 Nominations are to be returned within a set reasonable period of at least 10 school days. All parents should be informed of the exact closing date for nominations. Any nominations received after the school closes on that day are no valid.

Nominations are valid if:

- a) The nominations are returned before the published date of the closure of nominations
- b) The nominee is a parent of a child on roll at the school, including the nursery
- c) The nomination is supported by a proposer and seconder
- d) The proposer and seconder are parents of a child on roll at the school, including the nursery
- e) A husband cannot propose a wife or vice-versa
- f) The nominee has the skills and experience required by the governing body to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school

4.3 The parent nominated should also supply a brief statement of not more than 100 words in support of his/her candidature. Before sending out the supporting statements, the school should ensure that the statement does not contain more than 100 words.

4.4 If any of the statements contain more than 100 words then the head teacher as the Returning Officer should decide to either send out the statement deleting any words over the 100, to treat the statement as null and void or to ask the parent/carer to re-write the statement by return of post. The parent/carer who wrote the statement should be advised of the course of action chosen by the Returning Officer at the same time as the statements are released.

5. Procedures for Election

5.1 If the number of nominees is smaller than or equal to the number of vacancies, no voting is required. Those nominated are simply declared to be governors.

5.2 If at any time the number of parents standing for election is less than the number of vacancies, the required number should be made up by persons appointed by the other members of the governing body. The following restrictions apply in the case of the appointment of parent governors:

- a) To appoint a person who is the parent of a registered pupil at the school where it is reasonably practicable to do so, or where it is not, to appoint a person who is the parent of one or more children of statutory school age
- b) Not to appoint any person as a parent governor if that person is:
 - i) An elected member of the Authority

- ii) Paid to work at the school for more than 500 hours in any 12 month period commencing on 1st August and finishing on 31st July.

5.3 If more nominations than vacancies are received then a secret ballot must be held.

6 Secret Ballot

6.1 The voting franchise for parent governor elections is one vote per vacancy for each parent/guardian in the household. That is one vacancy – one vote per parent, four vacancies – four votes per parent. Where there is more than one child in the family, send ballot papers with either the youngest child or the eldest, not both. Parents of children in the nursery are eligible to vote also.

Each parent is entitled to a ballot paper.

6.2 Voting papers should be sent out immediately following the closing date for nominations.

6.3 Each ballot paper must be numbered and stamped with the school stamp (or coloured paper). Accompanying the ballot papers should be the written statement of no more than 100 words received from each candidate.

6.4 The ballot paper should list the candidates Annex C, D and F)

6.5 Clear instructions for voting should be given and it should be stressed that no other mark should be made on the ballot paper.

6.6 Voting papers should be returned to the school by a set reasonable date. All parents should be informed of this date.

6.7 Parents should be able to vote by post or if s/he prefers, by having his/her ballot paper returned to the school by a registered pupil at the school.

6.8 Each school (including linked primary schools) has been provided with a ballot box and all voting papers are to be put in the box, preferably by parents or pupils as they arrive.

6.9 The ballot box should be kept in a secure place until the count takes place.

6.10 Care should be taken to ensure that each family gets the appropriate number of voting papers (one per parent). This could be done by sending

them via the eldest child. Schools should remind parents of this in the literature sent out with the ballot papers.

- 6.11 Where children are absent from school for a prolonged period, ballot papers should be sent to the home address.
- 6.12 If a ballot paper is inadvertently spoilt (or lost) a duplicate may be issued by the Returning Officer. A record should be kept of the number of duplicates issued.
- 6.13 An election is not invalidated by an individual's failure to receive or return a ballot paper.
- 6.14 Parent Associations (PTAs) may not use the school organisation and associated facilities for the publication and distribution of election materials in respect of parent governor elections.

7 The Count

- 7.1 The count should be conducted by the Returning Officer (who is normally the head teacher).
- 7.2 The counting of ballot papers and declaration of results should take place within two school days of the close of the poll.
- 7.3 All candidates should be invited to attend the count.
- 7.4 The head teacher is responsible for deciding the best method of carrying out the count. When the ballot box is opened the Returning Officer should check that all ballot papers have been stamped and numbered.
- 7.5 A suggested way of doing the count might be the tally method; one person reading and one person recording.
- 7.6 The total number of votes cast should then be counted for checking purposes. The votes for each candidate are then totalled to ensure that they are equal to the number of votes cast. If not the ballot papers should be re-counted until agreement is reached. In the result of a tie following a recount lots will be drawn.
- 7.7 Any candidate can request a re-count if the difference between the number of votes cast for individual candidates is small (e.g. 2%).

8 Post Election

- 8.1 When counting and checking are complete the results can be announced to any candidates present.

- 8.2 A written notice of the results must also be prepared and displayed in a prominent place in the school and a copy of this sent to all candidates without delay.
- 8.3 The written notice of the election should also be sent to Governors Support Service (including the date of the election) without delay.
- 8.4 The ballot papers should be retained securely for a period of six months, in case the election result is challenged.

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