**Southwark Council Children’s and Adults’ Services**

**Governor Services**

**PROCEDURE FOR PARENT GOVERNOR ELECTIONS**

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**INTRODUCTION**

This procedure is for Parent governor elections. There is a separate procedure for Staff governor elections.

The Headteacher or their appointee will act as Returning Officer and will be responsible for all decisions relating to the conduct of elections. Please ensure that Governor Services at Southwark Council are advised of the result of your election so that your Parent governor(s) can be added to our database and invited to induction training, and the next governing body meeting.

The sample letters allow some flexibility to be exercised and may be altered to attract the interest of your particular community.

If there are any queries about these procedures, please contact your Governor Development Advisor.

# Issued by

## Governor Services

Children’s and Adults’ Services

Southwark Council

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**Guidance Notes for Returning Officers and Headteachers**

1. The number of Parent governors who may serve on the governing body, and their terms of office, are stated in the governing body’s Instrument of Government or Articles of Association.
2. In schools where the Local Authority (LA) is responsible for Parent governor elections (community, community special, maintained nursery and voluntary controlled schools), the LA delegates its functions for such elections to the Headteacher, who in turn can delegate them to an appointed Returning Officer. In voluntary aided, foundation and foundation special schools, the governing body is responsible for Parent governor elections. These procedures should be followed when conducting an election.
3. The “Constitution of Governing Bodies – Statutory Guidance – August 2015” document states that “any parent, or carer, of a registered pupil at the school at the time of election is eligible to stand for election as a parent governor”. Returning Officers will need to adjudicate on any cases where eligibility is in doubt. Advice on adjudication can be obtained from your Governor Development Advisor.
4. A person is disqualified from election or appointment as a Parent governor of a school if they are–

(a) an elected member of the LA; or

(b) paid to work at the school for more than 500 hours (i.e. for more than one-third of the hours of a full-time equivalent) in any consecutive twelve month period (at the time of election or appointment).

1. The role of the Returning Officer is to ensure that the election of Parent governors is carried out efficiently and fairly, in accordance with the arrangements determined by the LA. Their decisions are final.
2. A register of electors’ names and addresses will need to be compiled and the Returning Officer should satisfy themselves as to its accuracy and completeness.
3. It is suggested that, where possible, the process is begun in advance of the end of the term of office of the current post holder(s), so that the term of office for the Parent governor(s) starts the day after the current post holder(s)’ term of office ends.
4. Each parent is allowed to vote once and only once in any ballot that is held, ie. where two parents have three children in a school, each parent is allowed one vote (not one vote per child).

**Timeline**

The process for electing Parent governors, in school days, is as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Before the start of the process | Headteacher appoints a Returning Officer, who ensures the register of electors’ names and addresses is up to date. Returning Officer decides whether, in the event of a ballot, the ballot box or postal voting system will be used (or a combination of the two). |  |
| DAY 1 | Returning Officer sends out nomination forms and accompanying explanatory letter detailing the election process. | Appendix  1 and 2 |
| DAY 11 | Closing date for the return of nomination forms to the Returning Officer via the school office. |  |
| DAY 12 | If the number of nominations is equal to or less than the number of vacancies, inform all candidate/s that they have been elected unopposed with immediate effect.  If the number of nominations is greater than the number of vacancies, then a ballot must be held. Ballot papers must be numbered, and must equal the number of parents in the school, although there should be no way of identifying any parent by the number on the ballot paper. This ensures that all parents can vote once, and can vote anonymously.  Letter explaining ballot process, election statements and numbered ballot papers to be sent to all parents.  Please see guidance on page 19 if you would like to use e-mail voting.  Where a parent does not live with their child and the school is unaware of their address, or where a parent is unable to attend the school to cast a vote, the school should make every effort to enable them to vote in the ballot. | Appendix 3  Appendix 4 or 5, and Appendix 7 |
| DAYS 13-22 | Ballot box in school for parent to return their ballot paper. Postal votes should be returned to the school office and placed in the ballot box by school staff.  Some schools might consider using a “double envelope” voting system.  Parents will be provided with two envelopes They will be asked to enclose the completed ballot paper in the first envelope which should be unmarked. This would then be sealed in the second envelope on which would be the votes name. This is to allow the returning officer to check eligibility to vote.  When ballot papers are returned, the returning officer will check the name on each outer envelope for entitlement to vote and make a record of the return of the ballot paper. This should be done in the presence of at least one witness. The inner envelope will then be removed and placed in the ballot box for counting when the ballot closes. | Appendix 7 |
| DAY 22 | Closing date for ballot. |  |
| DAY 23 | Returning Officer counts ballot papers as soon as possible after the deadline for voting has passed.  Candidates and an independent witness should be invited to attend.  If there is a tie, recount the papers, and if there is still a tie settle the vote by drawing lots.  Returning Officer to inform all candidates of the result as soon as possible. | Appendix 7 |
| DAY 24 | Returning Officer to notify the Governor Development Advisor and Head of Governor Services of election results, and send them postal and e-mail addresses and contact numbers of successfully elected Parent governors.  Notify all parents of names of elected Parent governors. | Appendix 8 |
|  | Keep all papers in a secure place for at least six months. |  |

**If there are any queries, please contact your Governor Development Advisor**

**Appendix 1**

**Vacancy Letter/email to Parents** *(on school headed paper)*

We have (add number) Parent governor vacancy/vacancies which we need to fill as soon as possible. (name of school) has always aimed for a partnership with parents which undoubtedly brings great benefits to the children. One of the most significant ways you can help in promoting this aim is to volunteer to be a Parent governor.

The governing body's main tasks are:

* to ensure that the school has a clear vision, ethos and strategic direction;
* to hold the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils;
* to oversee the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

Parent governors are welcomed as valued members of the team and play a vital role in ensuring the governing body is aware of the views of parents and the local community. We feel sure that there are parents prepared to take on this important role and give their time and commitment to helping us to continue to improve the school's performance.

In looking to fill this vacancy the governors of the school have identified the following skills, experience and attributes that they feel would help strengthen the governing body:

* (skills)

Training and support will be available to help you develop into the role. This will include in-house mentoring and support as well as access to external governor training [if your school has bought into any training offer].

Our governing body expects governors to:

* attend (add number) termly meeting(s) of the full governing body
* be a member of (add number) committee(s) and attend (add number) termly committee meeting(s)
* visit the school formally for monitoring purposes at least (add number) times a term/year
* visit the school informally at least (add number) times a year
* commit to attend training courses, and undertake additional independent research as required to ensure you are able to function efficiently as a governor

If you feel you can help in this capacity please complete the attached nomination form which will need to be returned to the school by the closing date on (date).

Please note that for the protection of children all governor appointments are subject to a DBS check.

If there are more nominations than vacancies, we will hold a ballot which will close on date, and you will be sent a voting paper in due course.

Yours sincerely

Returning Officer, on behalf of the Headteacher

[xxxx] school

**Appendix 2 – Page 1**

**Nomination Form for Parent Governors** *(on school headed paper)*

**I would like to nominate myself to be a parent governor.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name: Mrs/Ms/Miss/Mr/Other………..** | |
| **Address:** | |
| **Home tel. No:** | **Work tel. No:** |
| **Email:** | |
| **I am the parent/guardian of (please enter below the names of your children who currently attend the school).** | |
| Please use this space for a brief personal statement to support your nomination, setting out clearly the skills you feel you can contribute to effective governance and the success of the school. This statement will be circulated to parents if there is to be a ballot. | |
| I confirm that I have read the Qualifications and Disqualifications (regulation 17 and Schedule 4 of the Constitution Regulations 2012) overleaf and declare that I am not disqualified from serving as a school governor.  I understand that if successfully elected, I must co-operate with the application for a DBS check by the school, within 21 days of my election.  I am aware that if successfully elected my postal and e-mail addresses and contact numbers will be sent to and stored confidentially on a database by Governor Services at Southwark Council.  Signed\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | |

**Appendix 2 – Page 2**

**Who can serve as a School Governor?**

Under the *School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012* a governor

* Must be aged 18 or over at the time of his/her election or appointment
* Can not be a registered pupil at the school.
* Cannot hold more than one governor post at the same school at the same time.

A person is disqualified from holding or continuing to hold office if that person:

* is the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or an interim order, debt relief restrictions order, an interim debt relief restrictions order or their estate has been sequestrated and the sequestration has not been discharged, annulled or reduced is subject to a disqualification order or disqualification undertaking under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986, a disqualification order under Part 2 of the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, a disqualification undertaking accepted under the Company Directors Disqualification (Northern Ireland) Order 2002, or an order made under section 429(2)(b) of the Insolvency Act 1986 (failure to pay under county court administration order)
* has been removed from the office of charity trustee or trustee for a charity by the Charity Commission or Commissioners or High Court on grounds of any misconduct or mismanagement, or under section 34 of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 from being concerned in the management or control of any body
* is included in the list of teachers or workers considered by the Secretary of State as unsuitable to work with children or young people
* is barred from any regulated activity relating to children
* is subject to a direction of the Secretary of State under section 128 of the Education and Skills Act 2008
* is disqualified from working with children or from registering for child-minding or providing day care
* is disqualified from being an independent school proprietor, teacher or employee by the Secretary of State
* has been sentenced to three months or more in prison (without the option of a fine) in the five years before becoming a governor or since becoming a governor
* has received a prison sentence of two years or more in the 20 years before becoming a governor
* has at any time received a prison sentence of five years or more
* has been fined for causing a nuisance or disturbance on school premises during the five years prior to or since appointment or election as a governor
* refuses a request for the clerk to apply to the Disclosure and Barring Service for a criminal records check.

A person is disqualified from being a governor of a particular school if they have failed to attend the meetings of the governing body of that school for a continuous period of six months, beginning with the date of the first meeting they failed to attend, without the consent of the governing body. This does not apply to the Headteacher or to foundation governors appointed by virtue of their office.

**Appendix 3**

**Letter to Nominees – Elected Unopposed** (on School headed paper)

[Date]

Dear Parent/Guardian,

**Parent Governor Elections**

I am writing to let you know that nominations for this election have now closed. As the number of nominations did not exceed the places available you have been elected unopposed with immediate effect.

Congratulations on your election. I will pass your details to the Governor Development Advisor, and to the Head of Governor Services who will send you an induction pack.

The date of the next Governing Body meeting is (Date) at (Time).

Yours sincerely,

Returning Officer, on behalf of the Headteacher

[xxxx] school

**Appendix 4**

**Letter to Parents – Ballot box in school** (on School headed paper)

Dear Parent/Carer

PARENT GOVERNOR ELECTION

I wrote to you on (date) to invite nominations for (add number) Parent governor vacancy/vacancies.

I am delighted to say that there has been a good response and there are

(insert number) nominees. This means we must now hold a ballot.

I enclose a ballot paper. You can vote for up to (insert number equal to the number of vacancies) of the nominees. As indicated on the ballot paper you should vote by marking an X alongside the name(s) of the parent(s) you support.

Please note that each parent/guardian is entitled to a separate vote in the election, and the number of ballot papers enclosed is based on the number of parents/guardians registered at this address with the school. Please also note that each parent is only entitled to vote in a ballot once, regardless of how many children they may have in the school.

Where a parent does not live with their child and the school is unaware of their address, or if a postal vote is required, please let me know in good time, and I will make every effort to enable you to vote in the ballot.

All nominees have been invited to provide a written statement outlining their suitability to be a governor, and these are enclosed.

Ballot papers are numbered, and equal the number of parents in the school, although there is no way of identifying any parent by the number on the ballot paper. This ensures that all parents can vote only once, and can vote anonymously.

Please ensure that all voting forms are placed in the ballot box in the school by the closing date of the ballot, which is (add date).

Yours Sincerely

Returning Officer, on behalf of the Headteacher

[xxxx] school

[note to Returning Officer - attach parents’ supporting statements]

**Appendix 5**

**Letter to Parents - Postal Ballot** (on School headed paper)

Dear Parent/Carer

PARENT GOVERNOR ELECTION

I wrote to you on (date) to invite nominations for (add number) Parent governor vacancy/vacancies.

I am delighted to say that there has been a good response and there are (insert number) nominees. This means we must now hold a ballot.

I enclose a ballot paper. You can vote for up to (insert number equal to the number of vacancies) of the nominees. As indicated on the ballot paper you should vote by marking an X alongside the name(s) of the parent(s) you support.

Please note that each parent/guardian is entitled to a separate vote in the election, and the number of ballot papers enclosed is based on the number of parents/guardians registered at this address with the school. Please also note that each parent is only entitled to vote in a ballot once, regardless of how many children they may have in the school.

Where a parent does not live with their child and the school is unaware of their address, I will make every effort to enable you to vote in the ballot.

All nominees have been invited to provide a written statement, these are attached.

**EITHER**

Also enclosed are two envelopes for each parent at this address. This is intended to ensure that how you vote remains confidential. Once you have marked the ballot paper you should seal it in the unmarked envelope, then put this unmarked envelope containing the ballot paper into the second envelope. You should then write your name and who you are the parent of on the outside of the second envelope and add your signature. The closing date for the return of ballot papers is<insert date>.

When the envelopes are received we check the outer envelopes to make sure that they are from parents who are entitled to vote. They are then opened and the inner envelopes are placed unopened in the ballot box. This ensures that when we later open the inner envelopes to count the votes there is no way of telling who voted for whom.

**OR (delete as applicable)**

Also enclosed are envelopes for each parent at this address. Once you have marked the ballot paper you should seal it in the unmarked envelope provided, and post or hand deliver the sealed envelope to the school office. Ballot papers are numbered, and equal the number of parents in the school, although there is no way of identifying any parent by the number on the ballot paper. This ensures that all parents can vote only once, and can vote anonymously.

When the envelopes are received they are placed unopened in the ballot box, until after the closing date of the ballot and they are opened and counted.

**FOLLOWED BY**

Please ensure that all voting forms are returned to the school by the closing date of the ballot, which is (add date).

Yours Sincerely

Returning Officer, on behalf of the Headteacher

[xxxx] school

[note to Returning Officer - attach parents’ supporting statements]

**Appendix 6**

**Letter to Parents - email Ballot**

Dear Parent/Carer

PARENT GOVERNOR ELECTION

I wrote to you on (date) to invite nominations for (add number) Parent governor vacancy/vacancies.

I am delighted to say that there has been a good response and there are (insert number) nominees. This means we must now hold a confidential ballot.

Please note that each parent/guardian is entitled to a separate vote in the election and you can vote for up to (insert number equal to the number of vacancies) of the nominees.

Your vote/s should be submitted to (insert confidential e-mail address. It is helpful to set up one specifically for parent governor nominations). Please also include the initials of your children and class.

All nominees have been invited to provide a written statement, these are attached.

The closing date and time for receipt of e-mails is (date and time). The result will be available after the count and published to parents.

If you require a paper ballot, these will be made available (insert how parents can access other methods of voting).

Yours Sincerely

Returning Officer, on behalf of the Headteacher

[xxxx] school

[note to Returning Officer - attach parents’ supporting statements]

**Appendix 7**

**VOTING PAPER FOR THE ELECTION OF**

**PARENT(S) TO THE GOVERNING BODY OF [NAME OF SCHOOL]**

There are (add number) Parent governor vacancy/vacancies.

You may vote for no more than [Number of vacancies] nominees.

To cast your vote(s), please put an **X** in the box next to the name(s) of the nominee(s) you are voting for.

The names of the nominees standing in the election are given below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name of Nominee** | **Mark X** |
| **[Name]** |  |
| **[Name]** |  |
| **[Name]** |  |
| **[Name]** |  |
| **[Name]** |  |
| **[Name]** |  |

**When you have voted please place this completed ballot paper in the unmarked envelope provided, and post or hand deliver the sealed envelope to the school office**

**OR**

**When you have voted please place this completed ballot paper in the ballot box.**

**Your completed voting form must be received by the School Office by the closing date on [date].**

**Appendix 8**

**Letter to Nominees – Results of Ballot** (on School headed paper)

[Date]

Dear

**Parent Governor Election**

Thank you for standing as a nominee for election as a Parent governor. I am now writing to inform you that (Name of candidate(s) with most votes) received the most votes and is/are therefore elected as a Parent governor(s).

A copy of the results is attached for your information.

Yours sincerely,

Returning Officer, on behalf of the Headteacher

[xxxx] school

**Appendix 9**

**Notification of the result to Governor Services and parents**

**NOTIFICATION OF THE RESULT OF THE PARENT GOVERNOR ELECTION**

**I certify that following the election, (add NAME/s) has/have been elected by the parents of this school as Parent governor(s) to the Governing Body.**

Signed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Returning Officer)

Signed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Headteacher)

**Appendix 10**

NGA Guidance September 2020

**COVID-19 recovery: parent governor / trustee elections**

Partial school closures in the summer term meant that many professional and organisational matters, including staff and parent governor/trustee elections, were put on hold. Schools are now open to all pupils (albeit with strict COVID-19 control measures in place) and whilst some governing boards will continue to take a pragmatic approach to the timing of governor elections and continue to function with vacancies where necessary, others will be looking to proceed without further delay*.*

This information sheet outlines the requirements and approach for carrying out parent governor and trustee elections in the current climate.

**Electing staff governors and trustees**

Most staff have now returned to work in schools and so a similar election process to that which was in place prior to COVID-19 should be suitable. However, if any staff are isolating, arrangements need to be made for those staff to participate in voting. This could include offering the member of staff the option of a postal or email vote.

**Electing parent governors and trustees**

There is no requirement to use any specific system for the election of parent governors or trustees. In most schools, elections would normally be carried out with letters and forms being sent to parents in hard copy format. Some schools may choose to provide an alternative voting method that supports the COVID-19 control measures in place. There is scope to use an electronic voting method for parent governor/trustee elections, provided the following criteria is met:

◼ all individuals that are eligible to stand are informed of the vacancy and informed that they can stand for election and vote

◼ those individuals are given the opportunity to do so

◼ mechanisms are in place to ensure that the process is fair, and safeguards are in place to ensure that one person cannot cast two votes

◼voter confidentiality is maintained

◼ academies should ensure that any voting system complies with rules set out in their articles of association (or relevant procedural document)

◼ maintained schools must provide the opportunity for postal voting (including delivery by hand) and should check with their local authority to see if specific voting systems are recommended or mandated

**Alternative voting methods**

Whilst schools may decide that an alternative to paper voting forms is preferable at this time, this does not mean that paper forms cannot be used. A pragmatic approach should be taken to decide the most appropriate method, balancing safety and feasibility. Potential alternative voting methods include:

**Existing home-school communication tools**

Many schools have established and effective electronic home-school communication tools in place. These include applications such as ParentMail, SchoolPing (and many more). Some schools are using these communication tools to facilitate electronic voting. In some cases, these tools can be used to manage the entire process, from an initial message to parents to explain the process through to generating an electronic voting form (in much the same way as parents might complete a consent form).

**Email**

A dedicated email inbox can be created for voting forms to be returned to. In this case, care should be taken to ensure that only essential access is given to this inbox to maintain confidentiality. Schools also need to monitor eligibility to vote – for example, only one vote per email address is allowed (and the email address must be a match to the school’s existing database). **Online survey tools**

Services like Google Forms, Microsoft Forms and SurveyMonkey may offer an efficient voting method. These services can also make use of the school’s existing email database. These services use a variety of methods and so care must be taken to ensure eligibility to vote and maintain confidentiality. Some of these services have the capability to collect votes anonymously and to limit votes to one per email address. However, some of these features may come at a cost.

Communication tools and their capabilities vary considerably between schools. As such, schools must ensure that the voting method they choose meets the outlined criteria. Where we have mentioned specific services in this information sheet, this should not be regarded as a recommendation by NGA.

**Why allow postal voting?**

Not all parents are able to engage via email (or other electronic means of communication). This could be because parents do not have access to a device with email or may have difficulty using email if, for example, English is not their first language. Parents may also be unable to access email due to a disability. Whilst parents must have the opportunity to vote via post, this facility can be provided only where needed (not necessarily as a matter of course for all parents).

**Addendum from Southwark Governor Services**

The following website provides an electronic polling service

<https://www.choicevoting.co.uk/>