

# Could **you** be a governor?

Bristol needs more volunteers to join School Governing Boards.  
Could your business skills help drive up school standards and keep them flying high?



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**Are you up to the challenge?**

If you or your employees are over 18 and have what it takes to help schools grow, please visit [www.bristol.gov.uk/BeAGovernor](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/BeAGovernor)

# Could **you** be a governor?

To be a school governor, or academy trustee, you don't need a degree – just the right attitude, skills that schools need, plus some time to take on the commitment.

## Schools

The education landscape is changing. Bristol's schools are now a lively mix of Local Authority maintained schools, some 'stand-alone' academies and some run as Multi Academy Trusts or small federations.

## Performance

The vast majority are performing well, with some spectacular success stories. At times however, some schools get into significant difficulty and need extra help.

## Governance

School Governing Boards are also changing to better represent the skills needed in this rapidly changing environment.

## Skills

Your people skills and the professional qualities developed through your work will help schools on their journey to success.

Are you up to the challenge?



**Bristol City Council works with Inspiring Governance to help match volunteers to the right school.**

**Once matched, you'll need to commit to some training, attend regular meetings (usually in the evening), and make occasional visits to the school during the day. Full training and excellent resources are available to you.**

**Hear from today's governors and schools**

Click the pictures to find out more



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# Hear from the business Finance Manager

**My employer supports me.** Being a school governor is championed by my employer, Lloyds Banking Group. As part of its Governor Programme, Lloyds has created an internal resource, *Standing Out*, to share experiences with existing and aspiring governors. It promotes corporate social responsibility and I'm proud to be part of that.

**Get to know the school.** This will help you understand what the role requires. You don't need to be an education specialist or have an in-depth understanding of how schools work. There are people available to help you with that!

**The challenges schools face.** All schools face the funding challenge and we help the school make changes to secure the resources it needs. In return, the role develops people who can bring wider skills back to their business lives, including leadership, strong governance and management. You get a more rounded set of people out of it.



James Broadway, Finance Manager at Lloyds Banking Group, and Governor for Ashley Down Schools Federation, Bristol.

"You're not there to tell the leadership team how to run the school. You're there to ensure they are doing an effective job in their professional role – holding them to account.

Seeing the interactive, colourful and interesting ways kids are being taught, by people who are genuinely excited about teaching them: that's a lovely surprise every time."

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# Hear from the Chair of Governors and Headteacher

**We help shape policy, training and national governance standards.** We want people with principles, people who are role models and can help to lead the school. You need to be outward facing, committed to supporting other people. Your sense of goodwill and moral purpose to help shape a whole community also supports you.

**As a governor you'll learn skills.** You will also build a network and develop personally – all these drive any business forward. And because this exchange is *pro bono* it's a win-win for schools and businesses.

**Bristol needs more governors.** We need people who can give two or three years or more. They can make a tremendous contribution in that time. Some small schools, special schools and those in difficulty really need high quality governors – and it's hard to get them.

**You need to be over 18.** It's an old perception that school governors only come from the older age group – younger people are stepping forward. Some primary school governors are in university.



Lawayne Jefferson (left), Communications Manager and Chair of Governors, with Sarah Baker, Headteacher, at Redland Green School, Bristol.

“Fresh approaches and new thinking benefit businesses. Being Chair of Governors helps develop my work in Communications, HR, Marketing and PR. My employer supports my governance duties because the competencies are a clear benefit. Governance concerns such a large part of society that it is worth any business forming this relationship – whether for customer service, new developments, cultural literacy, people skills, or leadership and management.” Lawayne Jefferson

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# Hear from the health scientist and parent governor

**It's not about your agenda.** You need to work as a team and make group decisions for the children. You'll get a wider view of education, its current challenges, and the pressure on teachers. It's a real eye opener into what they have to do on a daily basis. It will be give and take: what you can bring into school and take back to your business; what the business can be seen to be doing within its community.

**You hold schools to account.** Governing doesn't mean thinking up new ways for schools to do things. It's checking that what they are doing is working – and it's very rewarding.

**Success is strategic.** Every year the school makes a plan and checks how it's working throughout the year, looking at class progress and assessment data. If Ofsted inspectors have concerns, we focus on the issues they raise. If a school is 'Outstanding', you have to keep pushing to stay there, to continue to improve, and the parents want that. We're very focused on making steady progress in pupil attainment throughout the school.

**Businesses.** My employer knows it's good for my personal development and for sharing skills. Businesses can take governance further, link with secondary schools, develop training for kids, apprenticeships, and work experience – a real life-view.



Lynne Watson, NHS health scientist and parent governor at Bridge Farm Primary, Whitchurch, Bristol.

"I'm a Link Governor for Science which relates to my job. I work with the subject leader on Science priorities and make sure she has opportunities for professional development. In Science Week, on my day off, I helped 150 kids extract DNA from strawberries using washing up liquid, alcohol and tweezers. They still talk about their experiments in the playground. It's not the governor's usual role, but if you can find someone who's got enthusiasm for a subject, then why not use it."

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# Hear from the Library Manager and Chair of Governors

**Monitor, challenge and make a difference.** Ofsted often ask, “So what difference is that making?” As governors our main role is to both support and challenge the work of the Head and their school staff - the experts - so that they can do the very best for the children with the resources available.

As a partnership we must provide evidence that we are making a real difference.

**Support schools and develop your skills.** I was really impressed with my son’s school and wanted to support it by joining the Board of Governors.

I often ‘swap hats’. I’ve done plenty as a governor, which has really helped me in my job and it flows both ways. I’ve brought back to work some lessons about interviewing, budgets, and people skills – and put them into practice.

**For commercial organisations governance is about PR.** It’s also about giving back to the community, reputational benefit, skill share and employee development – because it offers them new insights. My employer has supported me, but I think they’ve gained too because I’ve developed my work skills. There are few jobs where you’re not involved in some kind of people management, and you’ll learn and develop that on a governing body.

**Communication.** One of our roles is to hear the parent voice. We can’t listen to every little thing, but we let people know what’s going on and sometimes make ourselves available in the playground. We can help resolve something before it escalates – a sort of early intervention.



Janet Bremner, Library Manager and Chair of Governors at St George Primary School, Bristol.

“It’s really useful to have someone with experience in HR, bid-writing, finance, or with an education perspective. Wellbeing and safeguarding are really important roles and responsibilities for governors.”

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# Hear from the Headteacher

**Skills we need.** We're looking for people who can offer a specific skill set, which can add value to what our school is about. Perhaps your background in banking can support the school in setting financial priorities and help us in that role.

**Funding is vital.** People who can help us identify and access funding streams are going to be increasingly important.

That's not traditional governance, but it's an additional resource you can help us unlock.

**Governors are responsible for big decisions.** The three main areas that you govern are: a school's Strategic Direction; Financial Accountability; and Outcomes and Standards. The challenge for governors is to work with the leadership team to build an open, honest and trusting relationship. It's a tough job with responsibility to match.

**We welcome non-parents.** It's fine if you've no family connection with the school. You can provide a more external, scrutinising view. You'll ask the questions that perhaps parent governors wouldn't ask, because of your different perspective.



Don Collins, Headteacher,  
Brunel Field Primary School

**"Businesses can raise their profile and demonstrate that they might not just be driven by the bottom line, but partly by a desire to do something right for the communities in which they operate. There's credence in doing something different and making an investment through action in the local community; and at the same time meeting their Corporate Social Responsibility priorities."**

Amy Sood, Headteacher, Ashley Down Primary School and Don Collins, Headteacher, Brunel Field Primary School

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# Hear from the local authority employee and parent governor

**Objectivity and passion.** There's no single type of person who could be a governor. You need to be able to work through problems and challenges and like any voluntary role, you need to have some passion for what you're doing. You'll make effective decisions and bring true value to discussions.

**Your commitment.** Time on the Governing Board is not as cumbersome as it may seem. I'm grateful that my employer understands the personal development the role offers and is flexible and happy for me to take the time I need.

**Transferable skills.** I bring with me the experience of managing the reputation of a major organisation, and understand how decisions can impact on parents, staff and the local community. I share advice on effective communication and management from my professional background – that's part of why you become a governor.



John Smith, Senior Public Relations Officer at Bristol City Council and parent governor at Upper Horfield Primary School, Bristol.

"There's a community role for organisations and their employees who've got a good understanding of the decision-making process. If you've got skills, abilities, and contacts, a local school can really work with you to improve their own situation."

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# The **skills** you can bring

What can you bring to a school?

Your professional experience, skills and enthusiasm will make all the difference to teachers and pupils.

Contact us if you can offer any of the following:

- **Experience in dealing with colleagues at all levels**
- **Knowledge of change management**
- **A background in finance, accountancy or law**
- **People skills – team players**
- **Ability to challenge constructively and help find solutions**
- **Strategic thinking; project management**
- **Time – and willingness to commit**
- **A passion for school subjects – or just a love of learning.**







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# Your **role** as a Governor

- Raise school standards
- Contribute to school leadership
- Provide strategic direction and vision
- Ensure accountability
- Appoint staff and oversee the budget
- Evaluate and monitor school performance
- Work with Ofsted
- Support and challenge decisions
- Advise on school policies and procedures

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# The **rewards** as a Governor

- Personal professional development
- Make a real difference to young people's lives
- Receive free training and support
- Share people-skills and build confidence
- Help a school reach its goals
- Bring transferable skills back to your workplace
- Show Corporate Social Responsibility

In return for the skills you bring, you'll take your governance experience back to your workplace and be able to apply it to your professional development. Feeding this learning into your team and organisation will be music to most business ears.





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## Four steps to getting on board

- 1 Register** with Be A Governor to tell us what skills and experience you can bring to a school. Create your account and we'll start the process to match you with a school.
- 2 Visit** the school and staff. Once matched, this will be an opportunity to ask questions and decide if it is the right match for you before the school proposes you as a governor.
- 3 Decide.** If you decide to become a governor and if you're successfully appointed, you can take your place on the governing board or as a trustee.
- 4 Welcome.** Once recruited you'll get a welcome pack, access to e-learning, plus online and telephone support to help you in your first year.



## Get in touch or apply today

- Apply today at: [www.bristol.gov.uk/BeAGovernor](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/BeAGovernor)
- If becoming a Bristol school governor interests you, but you want to know more, please email: [BeAGovernor@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:BeAGovernor@bristol.gov.uk)

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