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# **Diocese of Bristol Academies Trust**

# **Election of Parent Members of the Local Board**

## **Procedure for Nomination and Ballot**

**Level: 1**

**Date Adopted: 20<sup>th</sup> October 2015**



## **Introduction:**

When a serving parent local board member is reaching the end of his/her term of office, or has resigned, the Clerk to the local board will inform the local board and headteacher. A timetable for an election should be agreed that minimises delay and avoids school holidays. Whenever vacancies occur, the objective is to ensure that every parent is aware of the vacancy, of their eligibility to stand as, or nominate, a candidate, and to vote in the election; and to conduct an election as early as possible following notification of the vacancy. It is essential that whenever a vacancy occurs, an election is conducted even though it may be uncontested.

*A 'parent' is the parent of a pupil registered at the school at the time of the election. For the purpose of such elections the definition of parent includes:*

- *All natural parents, whether they are married or not.*
- *Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person.*
- *Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person in the sense that the child lives with them and they look after that child.*

*It is quite possible for several people to have parental responsibility at the same time. If another person has been given, or acquired, parental responsibility this does not extinguish anyone else's parental responsibility.*

*In some circumstances this can result in a child having more than two parents. Where this does occur, all the child's parents are entitled to take part in the election. In the event of a vote being cast by someone who does not fall within the definition of a parent the election shall not be invalidated.*

## **Procedures:**

The procedures to be followed at all times are as follows:

- a. The headteacher shall normally be the Returning Officer to conduct the election. The Returning Officer will send a letter to all parents notifying them that an election for a parent board member is required and inviting nominations on an enclosed nomination form (see Appendix 1). The Returning Officer will also enclose a sheet setting out the circumstances in which someone is not allowed to serve as a board member (Appendix 2). The nomination form will indicate the closing date for nominations, which will be not less than ten school days from the date of issue. Candidates will be invited to submit a statement in support of their nomination, which should be no longer than 100 words. This statement must not be altered by the Returning Officer. Where it exceeds 100 words, it must be returned immediately to the candidate for amendment.
- b. Each parent shall be entitled to one vote for each vacancy. No parent shall be able to cast more than one vote per vacancy nor more than one vote per candidate, regardless of the number of children that parent may have at the school.

- c. Candidates for election must be supported by a proposer and a seconder (who should also be parents/carers of children at the school) and must sign the nomination paper to indicate their willingness to stand. No parent should nominate more candidates than there are vacancies.
- d. Where the number of candidates nominated is the equal to or fewer than the number of vacancies, then all those nominated will be elected unopposed. A notice giving details of the unopposed candidates should be displayed in a prominent position at the school. The Clerk to the local board must be informed and the local board is then able to fill the vacancy(ies) by appointment. If more than two terms elapse between election and appointment a full election must be held again.
- e. If there are more nominations than vacancies, a ballot will be conducted as early as possible. The Returning Officer should prepare for distribution to parents (one per parent), a letter which gives details of the election and a numbered voting slip. Returning Officers will need to produce their own letters and voting slips as these will be individual to their own school, but they should follow the model (see Appendix 3). The Returning Officer shall decide the dates between which votes may be cast. This period shall be not less than five full school days. The voting slips should be produced on coloured paper and numbered consecutively but otherwise should bear no mark which would or could be used to identify the voter. Care must be taken to ensure that no parent receives more than one voting slip. This is especially important where a family has more than one child at the school. Voting slip and literature may need to be posted to the family home where a pupil is absent from school. Where voting slips are spoilt or lost the Returning Officer may, subject to an investigation of the circumstances involved, issue a duplicate paper. A note should be kept of the number of voting slips sent out and received.
- f. While candidate statements may be included on the voting slip, schools are not allowed to publish or assist with the distribution of manifestos, neither shall they provide candidates or their supporters with lists of voters.
- g. The voting slips should be returned to the school either (a) in person where it can be placed in a ballot box which has been supplied by the Returning Officer or (b) by post for the Returning Officer to place it in the ballot box. Proxy voting is not allowable.
- h. A notice of election should be placed in a prominent position at the school. The ballot box shall be easily accessible to parents during school hours only. The ballot box must be supervised at all times. Returned voting slips must be kept locked away unopened until the closing date.
- i. As soon as possible after the end of the voting period, and in any case within three working days, the Returning Officer in the presence of a witness and the candidates if they wish, shall count the votes and inform the candidates of the result. The Returning Officer shall give the candidates due notice of the time and where the votes will be counted. Candidates may nominate a friend to attend the count in their place. The Returning Officer is responsible for determining whether a “spoiled” vote should be included. The outcome of the vote will be decided by the simple majority vote system.

- j. The successful candidate(s) shall be the one(s) with the most votes regardless of whether or not these are a majority of the votes cast. In the event of a tie there should be a recount. If this does not produce a clear result, then the successful candidate(s) shall be the one(s) with the youngest child(ren) in the school. A notice publishing the result and the votes cast for each candidate shall be placed in a prominent position at the school (Appendix 4). Details of those elected and a copy of the election result notice shall be forwarded immediately to the Clerk to the local board. Details of the result should also be included in the next school letter to parents. The Clerk to the local board will notify DBAT of the names of successful candidates, stating the period of appointment.
  
- k. Voting slips should be retained for six months from the date of the count in case the result is challenged.
  
- l. If no nominations are received, every effort should be made to re-run the election process as soon as is practical.

The term of office for Parent local board Members is normally four years. Membership is not terminated automatically if they no longer have a child registered as a pupil at the school. They may resign but cannot be removed just because they no longer have a child attending the school. Where they do resign the resulting vacancy should normally be filled as quickly as possible, and by following the arrangements detailed above. The parent so elected will serve for four years and not the remaining portion of the predecessor's four year period of office. Parent local board Members are able to stand for re-election subject to their eligibility.

## Appendix 1 – Request for nominations letter and form

Dear Parent

Parent Local Board Member (Governor) Vacancy

Would you like to be more involved in your child's education?

If you would, why not consider becoming a local board member. There is currently a vacancy/ are currently xxx(number) vacancies for a parent local board member at this school.

The local board, with the headteacher, has overall responsibility for the running of the school. Their responsibilities include:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- Holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils
- Advising on school policies and procedures
- Helping recruit staff
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

If you are interested in becoming a parent local board member but feel a little daunted by the responsibility you may be taking on, remember that full training will be available, and you will always act as part of a team.

No special qualifications are needed and the most important thing is to have a keen interest in the school and be prepared to play an active part in the local board's work. However, we would particularly welcome nominations from parents with the following skills xxx(description of desired skills). Would you consider applying?

Local board members also need the ability to be able to build relationships with a range of people, to be able to work as part of a team, to be able to question, and to make connections between different types of information.

If you become a local board member you will be taking on the following commitments to help make sure the school is well managed:

- Share the responsibilities of the local board as summarised above.
- Attend and participate in meetings on a regular basis – the local board generally meets six times a year
- Undergo appropriate training
- You may also be invited to sit on appointment panels or attend committee meetings.

You will be required to sign the code of practice, and to apply for a DBS enhanced disclosure. Please also refer to the attached 'Qualifications and Disqualifications to serve as a local board member'.

If you would like to stand for election please complete the enclosed nomination form and return it to the school. You may also include a short personal statement to support your nomination, which should be no longer than 100 words.

The closing date for nominations is 12 noon on XXX (date).

If there are more nominations than vacancies the election will be by secret ballot. If that is necessary, voting papers will be sent to all parents together with details of the ballot procedure.

Yours sincerely

xxx (name)

Headteacher

Returning Officer

**Nomination Form:**

To the Returning Officer at XXX (School name)

Completed nomination forms must be returned to school by xxx (date).

We the undersigned, being the parents or guardians of children attending the school, wish to nominate

Full name of candidate:.....

(BLOCK CAPITALS)

Address of candidate:.....

.....

.....

as a Parent Local Board Member of the above named school.

Signed: ..... (Proposer)

Proposer name.....

Date .....

Signed: ..... (Secunder)

Secunder name.....

Date .....

The person nominated should:

- a) sign this form in order to show their willingness to stand as a candidate and to serve as a local board Member and as confirmation that you are not disqualified from standing (see attached).
- b) submit with this form a brief statement of themselves, their skills and experience and why they wish to serve as a local board member (maximum 100 words). This statement will be included on the voting slip if a ballot is held.

Signed ..... (Nominated person)

Date .....

**Appendix 2 –Qualifications and disqualifications to serve as a local board member**

A local board member must be aged 18 or over at the time of his/her election or appointment and cannot hold more than one membership at the same school.

A person is disqualified from holding or continuing to hold office as a local board member or associate member if he or she:

- is subject to a bankruptcy restriction order, an interim bankruptcy restrictions order, a debt relief restrictions order or an interim debt relief restrictions order;
- has had his/her estate sequestrated and the sequestration has not been discharged, annulled or reduced;
- is subject to:
  - a disqualification order or disqualification undertaking under the Company Directors Act 1986
  - a disqualification order under the Companies Directors Disqualification (Northern Ireland) Order 2002
  - a disqualification undertaking accepted under the Company Directors Disqualification (Northern Ireland) Order 2002
  - an order made under section 429(2)(b) of the Insolvency Act 1986 (failure to pay under a county court administration order);
- has been removed from the office of charity trustee or trustee for a charity by an order made by the Charity Commission or Commissioners or High Court on the grounds of any misconduct or mismanagement in the administration of the charity, or under section 34 of the Charities and Trustees Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 from being concerned in the management or control of anybody;
- is included in the list of people considered by the Secretary of State as unsuitable to work with children;
- is disqualified from working with children or subject to a direction under section 142 of the Education Act 2002;
- is disqualified from working with children under sections 28,29, or 29A of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000;
- is disqualified from registration under Part 2 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 for child minding or providing day care;
- is disqualified from registration under Part 3 of the Childcare Act 2006;
- has received a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of not less than 3 months (without the option of a fine) in the 5 years before or since becoming a local board member;
- has received a prison sentence of 2½ years or more in the 20 years before becoming a local board member;
- has at any time received a prison sentence of 5 years or more;
- has been convicted under section 547 of EA 1996 (nuisance or disturbance on school premises) or under section 85A of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 (nuisance or disturbance on educational premise) during the 5 years prior to or since appointment or election as a local board member;
- is employed at the school for more than 500 hours per academic year if wishing to stand for parent local board member at the same school;
- is an elected member of the Local Authority (applies to parent and community local board members only);
- has refused a request by the Clerk to the local board to make an application under section 113B of the Police Act 1997 for a criminal records certificate
- has been disqualified from holding office as a local board member of this school due to failure to attend local board meetings for a continuous period of six months

### Appendix 3 - Ballot letter

Dear Parent

Parent local board member election

I wrote to you on xxx(date) to invite nominations for the vacancy/vacancies for a parent local board member/parent local board members.

I am delighted to say that there has been a good response and there are xxx(number) candidates for the xxx(number) vacancy/vacancies. This means we must now hold a ballot.

Attached to this letter is a voting slip with a copy of the personal statements from the candidates who are xxx

You may vote for up to xxx(number equal to the number of vacancies) of the candidates. Each parent can submit one voting slip, regardless of the number of pupils you have attending the school. As indicated on the voting slip you should vote by marking an X alongside the name(s) of the parent(s) you support.

Once you have marked the voting slip you should seal it in an envelope. This should then be put in the ballot box, which can be found at xxx(named location, e.g. school foyer) by xxx(date- ten school days from the date of this letter). If it is not possible for you to vote in person, please return to the following address: xxx(address for Returning Officer).

The election will be decided by a simple majority of votes cast. In the event of a tie, the successful candidate(s) shall be the one(s) with the youngest child(ren) in the school.

When the election has been completed I will let you know the outcome. If in the meantime you have any queries, please let me know.

Yours sincerely

Returning Officer

**Voting slip**

Election of Parent Local Board Members for xxx(school name)

There are xxx(number) vacancies for parent local board members. You may vote for xxx(number) candidates, but NOT vote more than once for each candidate.

Candidates

xxx

xxx

xxx

(Insert a copy of candidates' personal statements, in alphabetical order of candidate)

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Election of parent local board members – xxx(school name)

Candidate	Mark an 'X' to indicate your vote
xxx(Insert names in alphabetical order)	

**Appendix 4 – Declaration of election result**

Declaration of the result of the parent local board member election to the local board of XXX  
(school name)

I declare that in the election on XXX (date) the votes cast were as follows:

Candidate name	Number of votes
xxx(Insert names in alphabetical order)	

I therefore declare XXX (Name of successful candidate) to be duly elected to serve as parent local board member.

Date:

Signed:

(Returning Officer)