

Further information

<i>Volunteer activity</i>	School governor (1)
<i>What I do</i>	Attend meetings of the Governing Body and some sub-committees; be a member on panels e.g. for exclusions, headteacher appraisal or staff recruitment; take particular interest in numeracy teaching in the school and meet with the numeracy coordinator once a term; I am Chair of Governors, and so I am in regular contact with the headteacher about a wide range of matters.
<i>Time commitment</i>	Six two hour evening meetings a year of the full governing body at the school; evening committee meetings (about 90 minutes, about five a year, also at the school); reading and preparation for meetings – this takes more time than if I were not Chair; visiting the school, which I try to do once a term, during the school day.
<i>Why I do it</i>	<p>I am passionate about education, and want to help the school get better at giving this lifeline to its pupils (the school is in a very deprived area).</p> <p>I think that my experience as part of the senior team at Highgate is helpful to the school, in particular with regards to the regulatory requirements of schools: I've read – and written – a lot of the policies that schools have to have, and so can advise and comment on these (and, I am not daunted by them).</p> <p>The school has a new headteacher, and I get on well with her and enjoy working with her. I know that professionally I am learning from her.</p>
<i>Downsides</i>	<p>The school's progress is limited by financial constraints and the many social problems in the community it serves. Recruitment of good staff is always very difficult. This means that it's sometimes hard to see the "return" on the time I put in.</p> <p>As Chair I feel very responsible for the school – and, legally, I am: if e.g. the school's child protection procedures are inadequate, then the responsibility ultimately falls on the governors.</p>
<i>What to do next</i>	<p>It's easy to find out more about being a school governor from a council website: follow the links from "Education" or "Children and Families".</p> <p>The Haringey link is www.haringey.gov.uk/index/children_and_families/education/governors.htm</p>

<i>Volunteer activity</i>	School governor (2)
<i>What I do</i>	I've been a governor at a state primary school in a poor area of Islington for 5 years. The governing body sets policy, hires the headteacher and deputy heads, and is answerable to the local authority (council) for the school's standards and performance. There are 18 governors in total at my school of whom 6 are executive and the rest are parent or community-related volunteer non-execs. I am one of the more active governors and spend 3-8 hours a month on school matters, 1-3 hours at school (mainly evening meetings) and the rest at home. My main inputs are in finance, an area where schools often lack expertise, and in a "critical friend" (sounding board, probing, questioning) role on any other school matters, e.g. curricular, disciplinary, fund raising, health and safety.
<i>What others do</i>	The school actively looks to use governors' areas of interest or expertise, e.g. it uses me for finance; another governor visits the school 1-2 times a week to read with children; another is particularly involved with the school's health and safety compliance and procedures; another regularly sits on committees for key appointments.
<i>Why I do it</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To put something back. - A different sort of mental stimulation to my normal work. The school's problems can be readily understood by an outsider but are often quite complex to solve. When it goes well there is a very rewarding sense of having contributed something meaningful to a team effort which will hopefully have a positive outcome on a lot of children's prospects. - The senior staff and many of the teaching staff are as competent and committed to the job as their equivalents in the City (my career area), but none have much experience of private sector environments. I get to see the world through their eyes a bit and vice versa. - It's possible to pin an end-date on the role. There are two or three major events/ objectives with which I've been particularly involved which will hopefully prove themselves successes and become embedded in the next two years. I will be out of ideas by then and it will be time to move on. - Having an insight into the state sector throws a bit of alternative light on the education my children are getting at private schools.
<i>Downsides</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Huge amount of acronyms, jargon and embedded practices to learn. As an outsider it hinders initial understanding greatly. I think if I were to become a governor at another school now I could contribute in the first two years what has taken me five at this one, just from being able to understand the starting point. - Government policies and unionisation mean radical change is normally not possible and the school is not fully in charge of its own destiny. You have to work within these constraints. - The local authority people with whom the school has to deal are sometimes extremely low quality, yet they control the school's funding and we have to report to them...
<i>What to do next</i>	Easy to apply through the Schools Governors One Stop Shop website, http://www.sgoss.org.uk/home/