The Bishop Konstant Catholic Academy Trust

Learning Communities, Inspired by Faith

Foundation Governors

Help the light, of Catholic education, shine bright.

This booklet is to provide information to practising Catholics about Foundation Governors. It is understood that many Parishioners may not be aware of Foundation Govenors and the highly valuable role they play within Catholic Education.

A number of our schools are open to welcoming new Foundation Governors on to their Academy Councils.

What are Foundation Governors?

Foundation Governors are members of a Catholic school's Academy Council. It is a voluntary role with a term of office of 4 years. The Bishop entrusts the power of governance which he received at his Episcopal Ordination to his Foundation Governors within each school's Academy Council. He relies upon their support as he is unable to exercise his role effectively without them.

Foundation Governors play an especially important role in the governance of a Catholic School as they are advocates for the Bishop's vision: 'To preserve and develop Catholic Education for the benefit of our pupils'. Unlike the other members of an Academy Council, Foundation Governors have a special connection to the Bishop, because he appoints them personally.

To be eligible to be a Foundation Governor you must be:

- A practising Catholic.
- Aged 18 or over.
- Have an interest in supporting the education of young people.
- Have time to attend and contribute to approximately 4-6 meetings per year.

Do you need experience in education, or as a Governor?

No experience is required. Although relevant experience as a school Governor or within an education setting is welcomed, it is useful to have alternative skill sets and perspectives so an Academy Council represents the local community. If you do not have experience, you have other life experience and transferable skills that may be useful to bring to the Academy Council.

Training and support

Regardless of experience or length of service, all Governors have a broad range of training, events and resources open and available to support you in your role.

The BKCAT Trust also have a friendly and dedicated Governance Team who are on hand to provide guidance for Governors.

What do Foundation Governors do?

The primary function of all school Governors (not only Foundation Governors) is to provide supportive challenge to the school's functions, monitor, and acquire assurances that school leaders are fulfilling their duties as per the school development plan and needs of the pupils.

Governors support the school, but are also prepared to question why decisions have been made and request information about the school to help them in their monitoring role.

As a Governor, you will gain a behind the scenes experience in school management. For example, you will monitor and challenge school leaders within the following areas:

- Finance and resources.
- Curriculum standards.
- Safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- Staffing, HR and wellbeing.
- SEND and pastoral care.

and much more...

Benefits of being a Foundation Governor

Grow as a Catholic

The most important benefit of being a Foundation Governor is the opportunity for service to God. Charity is a core Catholic Virtue, and being a Foundation Governor enables you to provide charitable contributions within or outside your Parish depending on the Academy Council you choose.

Foundation Governors build up the Catholic Church through their engagement with the school sector.

The time that you may expend in governance is a concrete expression of Christian charity. Through focusing on ordinary things, like the development of the curriculum, the Catholic life of the school, finance and safeguarding, you create environments in which our children can flourish, in this way significantly promoting the common good of our society.

School governance is necessarily a collective enterprise and through listening to each other and learning from each other and bearing with each other, Academy Councils seek to model purposeful Christian fellowship which is always oriented to the good of others and to the glory of God.

The work of school governors is often unperceived by others and hence its value is all the greater, for it involves putting into practice Christ's injunction that in our acts of mercy our left hand should not know what our right hand is doing (Mathew 6:3.)

"Social connectedness promotes overall health"

Many scientific studies have shown that positive social interaction is primary precursor for well-being and longevity. Being a Foundation Governor provides an opportunity for regular positive interactions with like minded individuals from a variety of backgrounds. Research has also shown that those who regularly engage in volunteering experience higher levels of mental-wellbeing than those who have never volunteered - It was noted that this applies in the context of those who have the time and capacity to volunteer.

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Benefits of being a Foundation Governor

Develop new skills

If you are not from an education background, or do not have previous governor experience, it goes without saying that you will develop a whole host of new skills and experience along your Governor journey.

Those experiences may lead to new careers, interests or perspectives to explore personally. Governors also have the opportunity to adopt specific roles such as " Safeguarding Governor" or "Health and Safety Governor" or might even choose to eventually become a Chair or Vice Chair. Governors who take on additional responsibilities will require extra training for their role, which may benefit you beyond your role as a Governor.

If you do come from a background of education you may choose to serve on the Academy Council of a different phase of education. For example, if you have worked within a Primary School setting you may opt to serve as a Secondary School Foundation Governor. Serving within a different phase of education could provide you with a whole new educational perspective and provide you with much needed experience should you consider transferring to an alternative educational phase in the future.

If you are experienced in a solely pupil-facing role, being a Foundation Governor will enable you to experience the management of a school, strategies and how important decisions are made.

"Being a Foundation Governor is about creating thinking time for Senior Leadership Teams; rather than being a leader yourself."

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"Using a level-headed temperament, FGs challenge, provide support and can engage at a level that they feel comfortable with."

Quotes taken from Foundation Governors at the Diocesan Governance Professionals Working Group- "Big Ideas" meeting 17.06.2024

Foundation Governors' testimonials?

Marc Auty, Foundation Governor (Chair), St Austin's Catholic Primary School.

"As a former St Austin's pupil, I wanted to ensure the children had the kind of start in life that I enjoyed.

As a Foundation Governor, I have been able to share my experience of owning and running businesses with an in-depth knowledge of finance. In return, I have gained a much greater understanding of how the Education sector operates and the challenges facing headteachers, staff and schools.

I enjoy sharing the strength of my Faith with staff and children, along with shaping and strengthening the links to our Parish community.

I retired in 2023, and following the loss of my partner the role of Foundation Governor has given me something to focus on, it ensures that my spare time is not spent idly.

I would say that the role of Governor can be easily achieved within a manageable timescale. It has opened joyful experiences in my life such as the chance to present to the children during careers week and encourage my alumni to come back to school almost 50 years later to present. I also, (at the request of staff) have accepted the role of Santa at the school Christmas Fair.

I would recommend others to become Foundation Governors, as it is enormously fulfilling to think that the groundwork set at primary school can lead to successful careers and strong Faith as a Catholic."

Marlyn Morgan, Foundation Governor, Holy Family St Michael's Catholic Primary School.

"I chose to become a Foundation Governor as I know the importance of Catholic Education and wished to be part of that process even though I have retired from working in education...

Foundation Governors testimonials?

Being a Foundation Governor enables me to be up to date with education matters particularly in the Catholic sector, and provides access to Governor development programmes.

Knowing that I am involved in a Diocesan school and having a direct link to Parish/Diocese helps me in realising the importance of passing on Faith to our children and families."

Tony Deighton, Foundation Governor (Vice Chair), St John the Baptist Catholic Primary School.

"As a parent, with 2 children attending St John The Baptist, I have a vested interest in the quality of their education and the overall school experience.

Being a Foundation Governor has helped develop my strategic planning and decision-making abilities. Additionally, it has enhanced my empathy and cultural awareness.

Being a Foundation Governor has strengthened my Faith as it has deepened my sense of purpose and commitment to serving others. Seeing the positive impact of our efforts on pupils' lives has reinforced my belief in the importance of community and education.

I have reached the stage of my life where I am more about giving to others than personal growth, however, being a school governor can create many avenues for personal and professional growth.

Being a school governor is manageable regarding time and workload. While it does require a commitment, the responsibilities are often flexible and can be balanced with personal and professional obligations.

I recommend others to become Governors. It's a rewarding experience that allows you to make a tangible difference. The role also offers personal growth and the satisfaction of contributing to a better future for the next generation."

Which schools have vacancies?

Availability of Foundation Governors places change. If you have a specific school in mind which you are interested in, please contact the Trust Governance Team and they will check to see if a vacancy is available.

Please see the table below for a list of our schools, their locations, linked Churches and Parish names. Many of our Governors choose schools which are linked to their own Parish as they enjoy the familiarity. Often, Governors may choose to serve in a school in an alternative Parish to their own. Again, choosing to become a Foundation Governor for a school outside of your Parish may provide an opportunity for expansion within the Catholic Communities.

I am interested, what do I do next?

If you are interested in a role as a Foundation Governor, please contact Governance@bkcat.uk and a member of the friendly Trust Governance Team will guide you through the next steps.

A conversation or visit can be arranged with the school's Academy Council Chair, or Headteacher before you make a final decision to apply to be a Foundation Governor.

Supplementing this information is a "Foundation Governor Roadmap" which provides a snapshot of the simple application process.

Trust school and Parish information

School	Linked Church	Parish
Pontefract Road, Castleford, WF10 4JB	St Joseph Pontefract Road, Castleford, WF10 4JB	Castleford, St Joseph
Station Fields, Garforth, LS25 1PS	St Benedict The Priory, Aberford Road, Garforth, LS25 1PX	Garforth, St Benedict
Cutsyke Road, Featherstone, Pontefract, WF7 6BD		Garforth, St Benedict Hemsworth, Sacred Heart & St Joseph Pontefract, St Joseph
Highfield Road, Hemsworth, Pontefract, WF9 4LJ	Sacred Heart Hemsworth, Market Street, Hemsworth, WF9 4LB	Hemsworth, Sacred Heart & St Joseph
Barnsley Road, Moorthorpe, Pontefract, WF9 2BP	St Joseph Barnsley Road, Moorthorpe, Pontefract, WF9 2BP	Hemsworth, Sacred Heart & St Joseph
Beckbridge Lane, Normanton, WF6 2HZ	St John the Baptist Newland Lane, Normanton, WF6 1BA	Normanton, St John the Baptist
Storrs Hill Road, Ossett, Wakefield, WF5 0DQ	St Ignatius Storrs Hill Road, Ossett, WF5 0DQ	Ossett, St Ignatius

School	Linked Church	Parish
Newgate, Pontefract, WF8 4AA	St Joseph Back Street, Pontefract, WF8 1NL	Pontefract, St Joseph
Cobblers Lane, Pontefract, WF8 2HN	St Michael Hill Top, Knottingley, WF11 9AQ	Pontefract, St Joseph
Baffam Lane, Selby, Y08 9AX	St Mary Gowthorpe, Selby, YO8 4HS	Selby, St Mary
Kennedy Drive, Goole, DN14 6HQ	St Joseph and St Thomas Pasture Road, Goole, DN14 6DP	Selby, St Mary
Back Duke of York Street, Wakefield, WF1 3PF	St Austin Wentworth Terrace, Wakefield, WF1 3QN	Wakefield, St Austin & English Martyrs
Dewsbury Road, Lupset, Wakefield, WF2 9DD	English Martyrs Dewsbury Road, Lupset, Wakefield, WF2 9DD	Wakefield, St Austin & English Martyrs
Barnsley Road, Sandal Wakefield, WF2 6EQ	SS Peter and Paul St George's Walk, Standbridge Lane, Wakefield, WF2 7NR	Wakefield, St Austin & English Martyrs Wakefield, SS Peter & Paul

Links for more information and references

The BKCAT website- https://www.bkcat.co.uk/governance/governor-recruitment/

The Catholic Diocese of Leeds website- https://www.dioceseofleeds.org.uk/education/education/education-education/governance-education/

Reference sources for benefits of sociality and volunteering. The books cited include references to numerous long-term scientific studies.

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Chatterjee, R. (2022). Happy Mind, Happy Life. Penguin UK.

Waldinger, R. and Schulz, M. (2023). The Good Life. Simon and Schuster.

The BKCAT Governance Team

governance@bkcat.uk

The Bishop Konstant Catholic Academy Trust
St Wilfrid's Catholic High School & Sixth Form College Cutsyke Road Featherstone WF7 6BD

Thank you for reading

God Bless