

Why do you feel it is important to get involved in education and what persuaded you to become a governor?

Schools are such an important part of shaping the community and our future - when you consider that today's students are tomorrow's decision makers I believe we should be doing all we can to equip them with the education and skills they will need to fulfil that role.

Education in general has always been a topic of interest for me – my university dissertation was based around the LEA proposal to close several schools in Sheffield and I have always maintained an interest in such issues so becoming a governor was something I had considered but didn't really understand how I could make it happen.

I work for a large company (BT) and the company does try to get involved with activities in the community so I heard about school governing opportunities earlier this year through a company briefing and then made some calls to find out what it would entail and how I could be involved.

I made sure that I could commit the time required to do this as I don't like doing things half-heartedly and once I was sure I filled in the forms and was appointed.

I hope that the role has mutual benefit I certainly get a lot out of it and I would hope I can reciprocate by contributing to the governing body in any way I can.

Please describe the type of school you are in e.g. primary, secondary, fresh-start, special measures etc. Please also describe your first impressions and how you were welcomed.

Carr Hill is a fairly large (350-400 pupils) primary school located in Retford, Nottinghamshire.

This is my first role as a school governor and I have to admit I was slightly apprehensive attending my first governors' meeting and visiting the school for the first timeI needn't have worried though...what immediately struck me was how everyone at the school is "on the same page" in terms of taking the school forward and ensuring it is a friendly, welcoming environment. Every person I have met at the school whether it be the head, support staff, teachers, pupils or fellow governors all have the interests of Carr Hill at the heart of what they do and are rightly proud of the school and its achievements. I feel very lucky to have been appointed to this school and to be working with such a friendly bunch of people.

Please describe the benefits that you gain, as an individual, from being a school governor?

I am personally getting development through working with a range of people who have various roles / jobs and differing views on issues but all with a common goal. I like the fact that this offers me an opportunity to learn more about the school and the community as well as all the policy and procedure which needs to be understood.

A lot of my development in BT has been through attending formal training courses and taking exams which has been appropriate at the time but I like the fact that being a school governor offers something different – I am getting development but at the same time I'm contributing - contributing to the governing body in any way I can.

Have you received any training? If so, how have you found it and how flexible is it?

I have attended a one day induction course which was presented by the local authority – this gave a good understanding of the role and responsibilities. I was also given a CD ROM which I have worked through and which can be used for future reference.

For informal training and learning there are various web sites such as governor.net which can provide good advice and I have also purchased a couple of "easy to read" books which have provided further insight.

How long do you spend on governor duties each month and how often do you attend meetings?

I attend the full governing body meetings - which are one per term (so three per year). These are the meetings which are key for a governor to attend and where many of the decisions are taken.

As I am new to the role and keen to understand more about the school and the governor duties I also attend the various committee meetings (the committees are Finance & General purposes, Pupils and Personnel and Strategic Development) and these also meet every term . So in total I will be attending 12 meetings per year.

The meetings I have attended so far have lasted 1-2 hours and move at quite a fast pace. The meetings have been in the early evening so it fits well with my work – it is a commitment as it is important to attend the meetings but I manage this by ensuring these are booked in my diary and that my management team are aware of the commitment I have made. I am also in a fortunate position of being able to take special leave if required (up to 4 days per year).

What challenges have you faced and how do you feel your skills from the world of work have helped you as a school governor?

Many of the challenges facing a school are similar to the ones I face in my work – mainly making the most of the resources available, ensuring that targets are met and that the customers (pupils /parents) are happy –so in many ways similar issues but a different context.

I think one thing that struck me was the range of things that are covered in a meeting from finance/ accounts, measures/statistics, people/staff, training, safety, building maintenance, technology each with their own set of TLAs – which I'm just beginning to grasp !

From a personal point of view and being a new governor I do ask questions and make sure I understand before making a decision just as I would do at work – I wouldn't vote on something I didn't understand so questioning, listening, clarification and understanding are key skills I use.