

## Ex Officio Clergy Governor Vacancies

### Advice for governing boards

The Education Team is often asked if we can provide someone to offer support to schools during a clergy pastoral vacancy. There are two distinct clergy roles involved in schools, though they are often carried out by the same individual:

- *The school incumbent role*  
This is where the priest has been involved in school life, for example in collective worship, pastoral support etc. This is not handled by the Education Team. Your Rural/Area Dean or Archdeacon can usually advise on any temporary cover arrangements.
- *The ex officio clergy foundation governor role*  
This is where the priest has been a member of the governing board, occupying an ex officio place specified in the Instrument of Government (for a maintained school) or in a Multi-Academy Trust's Scheme of Delegation or Governance Handbook (academy).

In the case of an academy, please consult with the central team of the Multi-Academy Trust. In the case of a maintained school the main options for these vacancies are outlined below.

### Options in different situations

#### 1. Normal pastoral vacancy:

In a pastoral vacancy that is expected to be filled within a reasonable time frame, the Board of Education is unable to supply an interim ex officio governor. There are very few potential volunteers from outside a parish's own community who can offer this sort of interim help and the Education Team has no bank of people to call on in this respect. It is also not always appropriate to seek a substitute if the vacancy is expected to be of reasonably short duration. "Bringing someone in" for a brief period who is not already known to the local parish community is likely to be of limited value to governance.

In such situations the expectation is that governors, especially other foundation governors, will step up to ensure that good links are maintained with the church during the vacancy. This might include for instance, sustaining contact with church officers, establishing reciprocal links with the PCC, sending an article for the parish newsletter, etc. Foundation governors should also engage in any preparations for SIAMs inspection.

#### 2. Longer term pastoral vacancy or situations where existing local clergy are unable to fulfil the ex officio governor role long term:

In these situations, an Archdeacon may choose to appoint someone as a substitute to fill the governor role. This might include, for instance, where there are two or three ex officio governor roles attached to a single clergy title.

Although it is the Archdeacon who formally appoints ex officio substitutes, in practice it is almost always the case that the person to fill such a vacancy will be someone already known to the school and/or the local parish community. The usual way forward is for the governing board to enquire locally whether there is anyone suitable who could fill the role. This might be a reader or other lay minister, church officer, priest with a permission to officiate (PTO), or minister from another Christian denomination locally. This role does not have to be held by a licensed minister, so a suitable local layperson is another option. A candidate should be actively able to support the school's Christian ethos.

Any ex officio substitute arrangement should be regarded as temporary; a substitute would be expected to stand down if a pastoral vacancy is subsequently filled by a clergy person who wishes to take on the foundation governor role.

Where the governing board has a candidate to suggest, please contact the Education Team who will seek the Archdeacon's approval on your behalf. Candidates may be asked to complete a diocesan foundation application form as part of appointments due diligence.

*Please note that these appointments cannot be made independently by the governing board.*

**3. Where an ex officio vacancy is very long term or permanent:**

There may be some situations where there is no reasonable prospect of local clergy ever being able to take on the ex officio governor role. For instance as the result of a parish reorganisation; or where local clergy numbers no longer enable all ex officio governor vacancies in local church schools to be filled.

In such situations it may be appropriate for the governing board to consider reconstitution to remove the ex officio foundation place from the Instrument of Government, and instead replace it with another appointed foundation place. This possibility is something to consider in conjunction with the Education Team and the Archdeacon, and only when other options have been thoroughly explored. Any reconstitution requires formal consent from the Board of Education.

**Where the Vicar is also a school site trustee:**

In all the above scenarios, in schools where the site trustees are 'the Vicar and Church Wardens', please be aware that no-one else can fulfil the Vicar's role as trustee. In rare situations this could mean that trustee responsibility during a pastoral vacancy rested solely with the church warden/s as the other trustee/s. Should any concerns about trustee matters arise during a pastoral vacancy, please discuss with the Education Team.

For any questions or concerns about ex officio clergy governor roles or vacancies on governing boards, in the first instance please contact the Education Team for advice.

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