

**Nomination of Foundation Governors**

**Guidance for Parish Priests**

***Purpose of this Guidance***

This guidance has been produced by the Catholic Education Service (CES) to assist Parish Priests in understanding their vital role in the process of the potential foundation governors nominating themselves.

In this guidance, references to schools includes references to academies and sixth-form colleges (unless stated otherwise).

***Requirement for skills based governing bodies***

Governing bodies[[1]](#footnote-1) are required to ensure that they are no bigger than they need to be to have all the skills necessary to carry out their functions. Those that appoint governors must be satisfied that the particular governor has the skills required to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school.

In relation to foundation governors it is the responsibility of the Ordinary[[2]](#footnote-2) to determine whether a potential foundation governor (or indeed an existing foundation governor) has the necessary skills and commitment to Catholic education, and this judgment will be assisted by the references that you provide during the nomination process.

***Nomination and Appointment of Foundation Governors***

You are encouraged to ensure that you are aware of the Nomination Form being used by your diocese as well as where it can be accessed e.g. on the diocese’s website/hardcopy from the diocese. This is so that you are able to encourage suitable persons to nominate themselves and advise where they can access the applicable documents.

Once an individual has submitted their nomination to serve as a foundation governor, the Ordinary will consider their nomination in two stages:

1. First, the Ordinary determines whether the nominee will make a suitable foundation governor. At this stage the nominee’s references and any additional diocesan criteria will be taken into account; and
2. Second, if the nominee is considered suitable, a decision will be made as to which governing body or bodies the nominee’s particular skills, knowledge and experience is best matched.

The Model *‘Procedural Flowchart: From Nomination to Appointment as Foundation Governor’*, which is a useful aid to understand the process at a glance, can be found at **Appendix A**.

***Nomination of Foundation Governors - the Parish Priest’s Role***

You are encouraged not only to consider persons who may, in your opinion, make good foundation governors, but also to encourage a positive perception of governorship in Catholic schools in the diocese generally. The CES has produced resources to assist you, particularly in respect of Education Sunday, which is a good time to draw attention to the good work carried out by Catholic schools and the need for committed governors from the Catholic community.

A person wishing to be considered for appointment as a foundation governor will be required, as part of the nomination process, to provide the name of a Priest who can verify their Catholic practice.

If you are nominated as a referee you will be contacted by your diocese for a reference. You do not need to provide a reference at the nomination stage.

If you *are* contacted to provide a reference your role as referee is primarily to verify that the nominee is a [committed and] practising Catholic, gives clear witness to the Gospel message and the Church’s teaching and has the ability to represent the Bishop on a governing body.

Where you provide a reference verifying the nominee’s Catholic practice (or not, as the case may be), you should be prepared to provide any further information or assurances to support your original reference as required by the Bishop, whether by way of written or oral representations.

***Appointment of Foundation Governors – the Bishop’s role***

In making his decision *where* to appoint a suitable foundation governor, the Bishop will carry out an exercise to match the skills, knowledge and experience of the foundation governor with the skills needed on a particular governing body/bodies. As part of this process, the Bishop will liaise with the Head Teacher or Principal and Chair of Governors of a school with a vacancy *and* a potential skills match. It is likely that the local Parish Priest(s) (or Dean) relating to the particular school(s) concerned will also be involved in these discussions to assist in determining whether the nominee is a suitable match. In this context, the Parish Priest is *not* being asked to verify the nominee’s Catholicity; a reference verifying the nominee’s Catholic practice will have been provided by the Parish Priest in which the nominee regularly worships. Clearly, if the Parish Priest of the school is the Priest of the parish in which the nominee worships, he will be required to verify Catholic practice *and* assist in determining the skills match between the nominee and the particular governing body.

You should note that no appointment has any effect until the point where the Ordinary has formally notified the nominee that the appointment has been made and the nominee has accepted the appointment. Before that point no actions should be taken which give the impression that an appointment has been, or will be, made.

It is important to understand that the appointment of foundation governors is at the absolute discretion of the Ordinary. Because of the nature of the decision-making process, the Ordinary will not normally be able to engage in any discussion or correspondence with you, or any other person(s) including the nominee and schools, where a nomination has not resulted in an appointment.

**Appendix A**

**Model Procedural Flowchart: From Nomination to Appointment as a Foundation Governor**

Diocese takes up references, barred list and DBS checks.

Potential Foundation Governor considers Foundation Governorship and completes and submits Nomination Form for consideration by the Diocese – see Fact Sheet for those interested in becoming a Governor in a Catholic School (note that it may take 6-8 weeks to receive a response from the date of submission of the Nomination Form).

Nomination not taken any further and Nominee informed.

Does Nominee satisfy general Diocesan criteria and are their references satisfactory?

No

Yes

Inform Nominee they are eligible to serve the Diocese as a Foundation Governor.

Is there a suitable existing governing body vacancy and does the Nominee satisfy any specific criteria relevant to the particular school?

Nominee is ‘pooled’/placed on a panel for future deployment. Nominee informed.

No

Yes

Diocese will consult locally with the Headteacher/Principal, Chair of Governors and the Parish Priest/Dean of the school(s) – does the Nominee have the requisite skills, knowledge and experience required by the governing body?

No

Yes

The Diocese will contact the Nominee to confirm their willingness to serve as Foundation Governor on that particular governing body.

The Nominee will receive a letter of appointment/Certificate from the Bishop confirming their appointment as his Foundation Governor and the Diocese will inform the Clerk to the governing body of the new appointment.

1. The term “governing body” in this guidance includes the Board of Directors and/or local governing body of an academy trust. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The term ‘Ordinary’ means the Diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf. In Religious Order schools this responsibility belongs to the relevant Religious Superior. For ease of reference, in this guidance they are collectively referred to as ‘the Ordinary’ and, where appropriate, this term also includes their respective representative officers. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)