Parent Governor Election Guidance
Conducting Elections Electronically

This guidance should be read alongside the existing guidance on electing parent governors which provides key information regarding the appropriate authority, who is eligible to stand as a parent governor and vote in an election. This also includes details of the disqualification criteria that applies to governors.

The School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012 state the appropriate authority must make all the necessary arrangements for the election of parent governors, and the arrangements may provide for every person who is entitled to vote to have an opportunity to do so by electronic means. In this guidance, the headteacher will be taken to be the appropriate authority.

Key Considerations

If you decide to use electronic voting for Parent Governor Elections, there are some key considerations:

❖ ensure there is means for those who cannot participate in this process electronically, or would prefer not to use electronic communication, to take part by post

❖ ensure the process is transparent and will stand up to scrutiny

❖ establish a means of having the correct contact details for all parents eligible to vote

❖ implement an appropriate checking system that ensures a parent cannot vote both electronically and by post

❖ ensure, for confidentiality, the minimum number of staff possible are involved in the election process

Options

This guidance provides 2 different options for boards to consider.

1. Simple email attachment system
Use of a dedicated school email address to issue ballot papers, ballot papers returned as an email attachment.

Pros	A simple system that uses many of the existing elements of the double envelope system
Cons	Requires parents to return ballot forms as an attachment that can be stored separately and securely and will require a manual count

2. Mail merge system
Use of mail merge to issue ballot forms and use of electronic form to collate votes.

Pros	An automated system that allocates a random number for each voter, votes returned using electronic form so no requirement for manual counting
Cons	Looks complicated but is straightforward if already familiar with mail merge. Requires careful checking to ensure that each parent only votes once

Federations

The School Governance (Constitution and Federations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 amends the Federations Regulations 2012 to provide that the governing body of every federation must include two parent governors, to be elected by parents of any federated school. Federations are advised to co-ordinate the process so that each school within the federation is using the same process and issuing documents at the same time with the same timescales. If the number of applications is equal to, or less than the number of vacancies to be filled, a ballot doesn't need to be held. The applicant(s) is automatically elected.

If a ballot is required, each school should conduct its own election process and send out ballot forms that contain details for <u>all</u> candidates that have put themselves forward. The candidate(s) that have the most votes (from all schools) at the point of the count will be elected.

Additional Resources

The following additional resources are provided to support the process.

Appendix A: [Nomination Email](#)

Appendix B: [Parent Governor Ballot Paper](#) (for use with option 1)

Appendix C: [Candidate Invite to Count](#)

Appendix D: [Email to Unsuccessful Candidates](#)

Option 1: Simple Email Attachment System

Follow the process as set out in the existing guidance on electing parent governors up to the point of seeking nominations.

Seeking Nominations

The headteacher should send an email to parents inviting applications for the role of parent governor:

- as soon as a parent governor resigns, or
- at the beginning of the term in which a parent governor's term of office expires

See Appendix A for an example email which includes the standard information you should send to all those eligible to be a parent governor. You should personalise it as you see fit to attract the right candidates for your school. For example, list any skills, experience or attributes the governance board identified would help to strengthen governance within the school.

Send the note to each email address where a pupil has more than one person with parental responsibility.

Where a vacancy arises at short notice, send out the email as soon as possible. You can delay this process until the beginning of the next term if this situation arises near the end of summer.

Parents interested in standing as a governor must complete a school governor application form.

This will ensure that all potential candidates are aware of the current disqualification criteria and it gives them the opportunity to state:

- their reasons for applying, and
- the experience and personal skills they can bring to the role.

Use this information to form their election statement to go out with the ballot paper, if this part of the process is required.

The closing date for applications should be ten school working days from the date the email was sent out. The actual closing date and time should be clearly stated in the email so that parents are aware of the timescale to submit their application form.

Processing Applications

If the number of applications is equal to, or less than the number of vacancies to be filled, a ballot does not need to be held. The applicant(s) is automatically elected. The headteacher should notify the successful candidate(s), as soon as possible after the closing date. They should then complete the relevant section on the School Governor application form(s) to confirm they have elected the candidate(s) and checked their identity. The headteacher should then pass it to the clerk to update their records and the Governor Services' membership database.

If there are more applications than there are vacancies, the headteacher will have to hold a secret ballot.

The ballot

The headteacher should issue ballot papers to all eligible parents as soon as possible, after the closing date for applications. See Appendix B for an example ballot paper. The 'Reasons for applying' and 'Experience and personal skills' sections of the application form should be used as the election statement.

Allow ten school working days between the ballot papers being sent out and the last date for their return. The return date and time should be clearly stated on the ballot papers. The election should be held by secret ballot. Ballot papers themselves should not be signed or the voter identified in any way.

Electronic voting system

1. Send an email with a ballot paper attached.
2. The voter returns the ballot paper as an attachment to xxxx.xxxxxx@xxxxprimary.hants.sch.uk and includes their full name in their email.
3. On receipt of the email the headteacher, or their nominee, should check the name provided against the list of those entitled to vote and tick off the voter, to ensure they only get one vote.
4. The attached ballot paper can then be printed off and placed in the ballot box for counting at the appointed time.

Voting

Each parent can vote once per vacancy. Some parents may have more than one child in a school. Therefore, the school will need to create a system to make sure no parent receives more than one ballot paper.

Treat a ballot paper as void if it is returned and it is not possible to confirm it is from a person entitled to vote. Ballot papers must be kept secure until the count.

Candidates have the right to attend the count. They must be advised, at the same time as the ballot papers are sent out, of the venue, date, and time of the count, or be sent a link if attendance is to be virtual. See example email to send to candidates in Appendix C.

Counting the ballot papers

You should undertake the count on the next school working day after the closing date for the return of the ballot papers.

The headteacher, or their nominee, will conduct the count. If there is a tie in the numbers of votes cast, the first step should be to recount the votes. If the votes are still equal for two or more candidates then the headteacher, or their nominee, should draw lots to decide the outcome of the ballot.

After the election

The headteacher should inform any candidates who were not at the count as soon as possible.   See example email informing the candidate of the result in Appendix D.

The headteacher should complete the relevant section on the School Governor application form to confirm the candidate has been elected and pass the relevant details to the person responsible for starting the DBS check process. The clerk should be sent the application form so that their records and the Governor Services' membership database (GovernorHub) can be updated.

Parents and governors should be informed of the result within ten school working days of the outcome.

Option 2: Mail Merge System

Follow the process as set out in the existing guidance on [electing parent governors](#) up to the point of seeking nominations.

Seeking Nominations

The headteacher should send an email to parents inviting applications for the role of parent governor:

- as soon as a parent governor resigns, or
- at the beginning of the term in which a parent governor's term of office expires

See [Appendix A](#) for an example email which includes the standard information you should send to all those eligible to be a parent governor. You should personalise it as you see fit to attract the right candidates for your school. For example, list any skills, experience or attributes the governance board identified would help to strengthen governance within the school.

Send the note to each email address where a pupil has more than one person with parental responsibility.

Where a vacancy arises at short notice, send out the email as soon as possible. You can delay this process until the beginning of the next term if this situation arises near the end of summer.

Parents interested in standing as a governor must complete a [school governor application form](#).

This will ensure that all potential candidates are aware of the current disqualification criteria and it gives them the opportunity to state:

- their reasons for applying, and
- the experience and personal skills they can bring to the role.

Use this information to form their election statement to go out with the ballot paper, if this part of the process is required.

The closing date for applications should be ten school working days from the date the email was sent out. The actual closing date and time should be clearly stated in the email so that parents are aware of the timescale to submit their application form.

The Ballot and Voting

The headteacher (see guidance on electing parent governors) will be required to issue ballot forms to all eligible parents as soon as possible after the closing date for applications if there are more candidates than vacancies.

1. Set up an Excel spreadsheet that contains all eligible voter names and email addresses, the information may already be available in this format. Alternatively, a suggested format is provided below. Ensure the spreadsheet is stored securely and in accordance with GDPR and the school's procedures.

	A	B	C
1	Name	Email Address	
2	Mr Harold Heathcliffe	h.heathcliffe@xxxxxxxxxxxx.com	
3	Mrs Sandra Heathcliffe	s.heathcliffe@xxxxxxxxxx.co.uk	
4	Miss Brenda Haversham	brenda@xxxxxxxxxxxxx.co.uk	
5	Mrs Caroline Twist	thetwists@xxxxxxxxxxx.net	
6	Mr Neville Twist	thetwists@xxxxxxxxxxx.net	
7	Miss Eve Fagin	EVE@xxxxxxxxxxx.org.uk	
8	Mr Fred Sykes	f.sykes@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.com	
9	Mrs Gwen Cratchet	gwencratchet@xxxxxxxxxxxco.uk	
10	Mrs Lyn Sharp	MrsLynSharp@xxxxxxxxxxxx.co.uk	
11	Mr Alan Darcy	a.darcy@xxxxxxxxxxx.com	
12	Mrs Imogen Copperfield	copperfield@xxxxxxxxx.net	
13	Miss Charlotte Eyre	charlotteeyre@xxxxxxxxxxx.co.uk	
14	Mr Kevin Crawley	kev@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.com	
15	Mrs Deborah Bumble	d.bumble@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.org.uk	
16			

2. Use Excel to create a random number (see formula below) for each eligible voter, including those who do not have an email address.   It is suggested you use a 6 figure number as shown in the example.

C2		f_x	=RANDBETWEEN(100000,999999)

	A	B	C
1	Name	Email Address	Random Number
2	Mr Harold Heathcliffe	h.heathcliffe@xxxxxxxxxxxx.com	664616
3	Mrs Sandra Heathcliffe	s.heathcliffe@xxxxxxxxxx.co.uk	943639
4	Miss Brenda Haversham	brenda@xxxxxxxxxxxxx.co.uk	475264
5	Mrs Caroline Twist	thetwists@xxxxxxxxxxx.net	296722
6	Mr Neville Twist	thetwists@xxxxxxxxxxx.net	421349
7	Miss Eve Fagin	EVE@xxxxxxxxxxx.org.uk	191317
8	Mr Fred Sykes	f.sykes@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.com	792651
9	Mrs Gwen Cratchet	gwencratchet@xxxxxxxxxxxco.uk	573507
10	Mrs Lyn Sharp	MrsLynSharp@xxxxxxxxxxxx.co.uk	919933
11	Mr Alan Darcy	a.darcy@xxxxxxxxxxx.com	775192
12	Mrs Imogen Copperfield	copperfield@xxxxxxxxx.net	231012
13	Miss Charlotte Eyre	charlotteeyre@xxxxxxxxxxx.co.uk	237941
14	Mr Kevin Crawley	kev@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.com	780818
15	Mrs Deborah Bumble	d.bumble@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.org.uk	905611
16			

3. It is important to note that randomly generated numbers are not static, each time the spreadsheet is opened or used the numbers will change. The randomly generated numbers must be copied and pasted using **'paste special' and select 'values'** into a new column. The numbers may change again at this point, but all numbers will remain unique. Delete column C leaving the column headed, 'voter number' only which contains the series of randomly generated voter numbers. Ensure the spreadsheet is saved because this will be used for the mail merge.

	A	B	C	D
1	Name	Email Address	Random Number	Voter Number
2	Mr Harold Heathcliffe	h.heathcliffe@xxxxxxxxxxxx.com	410225	593294
3	Mrs Sandra Heathcliffe	s.heathcliffe@xxxxxxxxxx.co.uk	752901	620503
4	Miss Brenda Haversham	brenda@xxxxxxxxxxxxx.co.uk	934853	201301
5	Mrs Caroline Twist	thetwists@xxxxxxxxxxx.net	264574	795921
6	Mr Neville Twist	thetwists@xxxxxxxxxxx.net	415147	997509
7	Miss Eve Fagin	EVE@xxxxxxxxxx.org.uk	667395	897218
8	Mr Fred Sykes	f.sykes@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx.com	171038	293510
9	Mrs Gwen Cratchet	gwencratchet@xxxxxxxxxxxco.uk	458182	117043
10	Mrs Lyn Sharp	MrsLynSharp@xxxxxxxxxxxx.co.uk	921403	362380
11	Mr Alan Darcy	a.darcy@xxxxxxxxxxx.com	162068	664460
12	Mrs Imogen Copperfield	copperfield@xxxxxxxxxx.net	893067	894195
13	Miss Charlotte Eyre	charlotteeyre@xxxxxxxxxxx.co.uk	973441	908301
14	Mr Kevin Crawley	kev@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.com	549065	258952
15	Mrs Deborah Bumble	d.bumble@xxxxxxxxxxxxx.org.uk	567990	413848
16				

In the example provided, Neville and Caroline Twist both share an email address, they will both receive an email that contains their unique voter number. You may wish to advise voters that for those sharing family email addresses it will be important to take care to use the voter number they have been allocated.

4. Using Word, choose 'Mailings', and then 'Start Mail Merge'. Select 'email addresses' from the dropdown list, and then 'select recipients'.
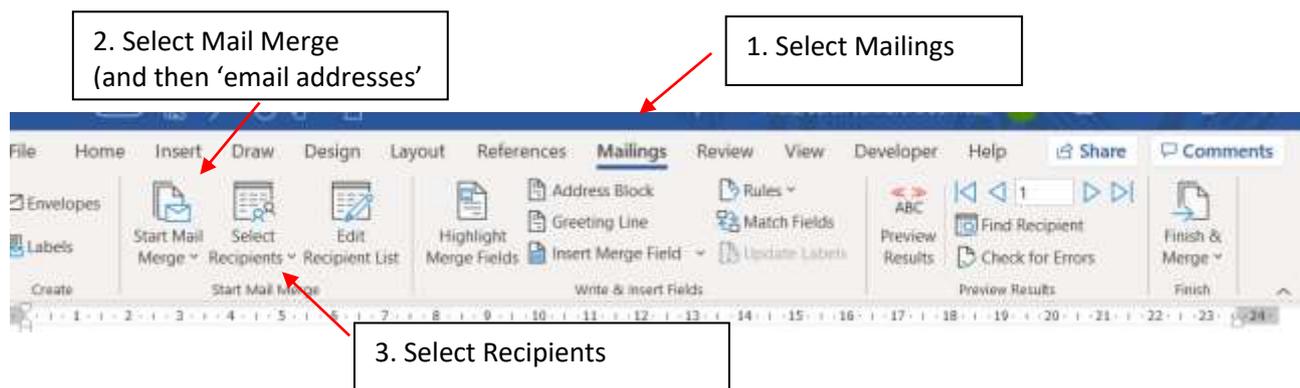
5. The prompt will ask for the spreadsheet that has been saved earlier to be selected. It is now a case of creating the template email.

6. A template email to accompany the ballot form is provided below. In the example provided, there are 2 parent governor vacancies.

7. Create the template email in Word, using Mail Merge. At the appropriate point in the email template, select 'insert merge field' and select the appropriate column heading from the Excel spreadsheet.
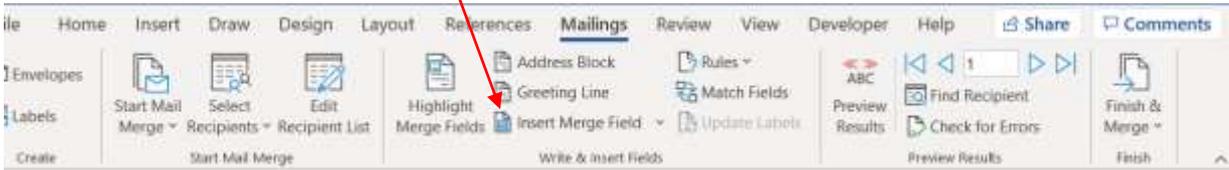
Use 'insert merge field' to select the right column heading from the spreadsheet

Dear «Name»

Parent Governor Election

Number of vacancies to be filled: <u>Two</u> at <u>Anytown Secondary School</u>

Instructions:

1. Each parent must vote separately.

2. Each parent is entitled to <u>a number of</u> votes equal to the number of vacancies: you will have <u>two votes</u>

3. You will be required to enter your voter number on the Ballot Form, **your voter number is: «Voter_Number»**

4. Your voter number can only be used by you, any forms without a valid voter number will not be counted.

Please see candidates' election statements below:

Amend for the number of parent governor vacancies and include school name

The 'ballot form' link will need to link to your electronic form (eg MS Forms)

Include candidate election statements from the application form

Jean Jones:
XXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX X XXXXXXXXXXX

Dave Green:
XXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX X XXXXXXXXXXX

Jane Clark:
XXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX X XXXXXXXXXXX

Use 'insert merge field' to select the right column heading from the spreadsheet, voters are also reminded of their 'voter number' below

Access the voting form here: Ballot Form

The 'ballot form' link will need to link to your electronic form (eg MS Forms)

**Please remember to add your voter number to your ballot form:
«Voter_Number»**

The closing date for elections <u>is:</u> Friday 9 October 2020 at midday. No forms will be accepted after this date and time.

Ensure to provide a closing date and time

Kind regards,

Anytown Secondary School

8. Create the electronic ballot form, for example using MS Forms. Ensure space is provided for the voter number to provided and ensure this is a mandatory field and only a numerical value can be entered. Be clear how many votes each voter will have (this is dependent on the number of vacancies, in the example there are 2 parent governor vacancies). In the example below voters are provided with the option to cast their 2 votes. If there is only 1 vacancy, voters would only have 1 vote each.

Allow 'anyone with a link to respond' and use the link that is generated through the 'Share' button as a hyperlink in the accompanying email. It is also possible to set the closing date and time for responses.

9. It will be important that voters who cannot vote electronically or do not wish to vote electronically are provided with paper copies of the email and electronic ballot form. If using MS Forms, the option is provided to print a paper version and the voter can enter their voter number manually.

10. When the mail merge template has been completed, and the appropriate links added as shown in step 7, select 'Finish & Merge' and 'Send email messages'. Depending on the mail server being used, there may be limits on the number of emails that can be sent in one go, for example, the spreadsheet may need to be segmented into batches of 500 or 1000 emails. Only segment the spreadsheet once all random numbers have been generated and saved to avoid duplication in voter numbers.

The sent emails will be stored in the 'sent' folder. Ensure sent emails are dealt with in accordance with GDPR and the school's procedures.

Counting the Ballot Papers

11. The ballot papers should be counted on the next school working day after the closing date. Candidates have the right to attend the count (see example email in Appendix C). They must be advised at the same time that ballot forms are issued of the venue, date and time of the count, or be sent a link if attendance is to be virtual.

12. The electronic responses to the ballot should be downloaded as an Excel spreadsheet. This will enable the spreadsheet to be sorted by voter number. The individual checking should be provided with a list of eligible voter numbers only (no names) which can be checked against the returns that have been received.

F	G	H	I
Column	Candidate names (se	Candidate names (se	
234786	Tom Smith	Jean Jones	
120965	Jean Jones	Tom Smith	
765921	Jean Jones	Jane Clark	
120987	Tom Smith	Tom Smith	
264346	Dave Green	Jean Jones	
262298	Dave Green	Jane Clark	
185324	Jane Clark	Jean Jones	
865021	Tom Smith	Jane Clark	
468421	Dave Green	Jane Clark	
198421	Tom Smith	Jane Clark	
753852	Jean Jones	Jane Clark	
765221	Jean Jones	Tom Smith	
276952	Dave Green	Tom Smith	
983542	Jean Jones	Tom Smith	
163246	Tom Smith	Jane Clark	
879324	Dave Green	Jane Clark	

13. Any votes received from ineligible voter numbers or any response that votes for the same candidate twice (or more if there is more than 1 vacancy) are void. Ensure paper votes are included in the count and checked for eligibility. It will be important to have 2 members of staff present throughout this process to verify the outcome. Votes for each candidate can then be tallied.

After the Election

14. The headteacher should inform any candidates who were not at the count as soon as possible.   See example email informing the candidate of the result in Appendix D.

The headteacher should complete the relevant section on the School Governor application form to confirm the candidate has been elected and pass the relevant details to the person responsible for starting the DBS check process. The clerk should be sent the application form so that their records and the Governor Services' membership database (GovernorHub) can be updated.

Parents and governors should be informed of the result within ten school working days of the outcome.

After the Election