

Volunteering to be a School Governor: Guidance for Staff

1. Introduction

One of the three strategic goals of The University of Manchester is Social Responsibility, where we have set out to make a positive contribution to the social and economic success of our local, national and international communities. The University's Vision for 2020 is that social responsibility will be recognised as a distinguishing feature of the University; and a specific dimension is the priority we will give to making a real difference to the life chances of people in our immediate neighbourhoods and wider region. The University's staff are crucial to this and will be expected to be *"leading proponents of public engagement in all forms, valued for their knowledge and expertise in public discourse, for listening to the wider community, policy development and the formation of public attitudes, values and understanding¹."*

Additionally, through the University's widening participation strategy, particular priority has been accorded to activities with young people, teachers, parents and local schools to raise aspirations towards higher forms of study within our local communities, where progression rates into higher education are among the lowest in the UK.

It is within this context that the University has established an initiative to encourage more staff to support the strategic development of local state schools in the University's local communities by volunteering as School Governors. This document sets out some background about the initiative, how to become involved and the support the University will provide to staff who are Governors. It should be read in conjunction with the University's:

- Public Service Leave policy (<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=39>) and
- Policy on Outside Work and Consultancy (<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=7929>) .

2. University of Manchester School Governor Initiative (UMSGI)

From 2012, and as part of the University's new Access Agreement with the Office for Fair Access (OFFA), a new University of Manchester School Governor Initiative (UMSGI) has been developed which aims to substantially increase the number of University staff working as Governors in local state primary and secondary schools². The University has committed to:

- help staff to find volunteering placements as governors in local schools through our partnerships with Governors for Schools and Inspiring Governance.

¹ See <http://www.manchester.ac.uk/aboutus/facts/vision/>

² See <http://www.manchester.ac.uk/undergraduate/schoolsandcolleges/publications/>

- provide a network for University staff working as governors to share best practice, support each other and act as positive ambassadors for the University's work with schools and colleges.

A specific target has been agreed with the Office for Fair Access that the University will increase the proportion of staff working as School Governors by 50% from its baseline in 2011.

3. Becoming a school governor

By becoming a governor staff will have an opportunity to broaden skills and make an important contribution to the development of a school. They may become involved in issues as diverse as site management, marketing, pupil welfare, curriculum development, HR or finance. Training is offered locally to build personal skills and boost self-confidence. Volunteer governors do not have to be parents, nor do they need first-hand experience of the education system.

The University will support staff in finding a placement through:

- Governors for Schools, a free service for volunteers, schools and employers. The University has a long-standing partnership with SGOSS. Go to **www.sgo.org.uk** to register your interest online and someone will be in touch.
- Inspiring Governance, a new free service that connects volunteers interested in becoming governors with schools and colleges nationwide. Go to **www.inspiringgovernance.org** to find out more about the service they offer to schools, governing bodies and volunteers.

For internal enquiries about the governor network and the broader UMSGI initiative, staff can contact Alison Gregory, Undergraduate Recruitment and Widening Participation Officer at:

alison.gregory@manchester.ac.uk/0161_306_4049

Please visit: www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/umsgi

4. Support from the University

Staff are encouraged to support the School Governor Initiative and the University recognises the value this work can bring both to individuals and the University in terms of its impact on the local community. Many of the duties involved in being a Governor will take place outside of working hours and do not therefore require time off from work. Staff cannot claim time off in lieu for school governor duties performed out of normal working hours.

However, the University will provide reasonable amounts of paid time off work during normal working hours (in addition to annual leave) where necessary. Reasonable paid time off work is designed to assist staff undertaking *core* duties essential to the role of a School Governor. These would not normally exceed four

or five days per year *as a maximum* (pro rata for part-time members of staff) but for experienced School Governors in the University it would in most cases be less. These core duties might include, *inter alia*:

- A meeting of the Board of Governors that started before the end of the working day e.g. 4pm. This would include appropriate travel time.
- Being asked to represent the Board of Governors on an interview panel for a new Headteacher
- The need to attend a training or briefing session key to the role
- Making once per year visits during the school day if requested by the Head Teacher
- Attendance at assemblies and school open days

There are also a range of *optional* duties where School Governors may be asked to represent the Board. Examples may include representing the Board at a daytime event or award ceremony, or putting oneself forward to voluntarily take on additional duties such as involvement in a particular project. Time off work for these non-core duties may be with or without pay, depending on how much time staff have already taken for core duties.

All time off work must be agreed in advance with the line manager. Staff should give as much advance notice as possible. Normally schools will be able to provide a schedule of main meetings for a whole academic year which will allow staff to plan ahead for absences in good time.

Line managers would normally be expected to accommodate requests for leave wherever possible, but will also have to be mindful of the effect of such absences on the effective running of service areas. Agreement will not be unreasonably withheld.

5. Application in accordance with Policy on Outside Work and Consultancy

Unlike other potential areas of outside work, no conflict of interest is envisaged for any staff wishing to support a local school by becoming a Governor. However, staff taking on any outside interest, of which being a School Governor forms a part, are expected to complete a pro-forma to be signed off by their line manager. The full policy on outside work and consultancy can be read at, which includes the relevant pro-forma:

<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=7929>