



**MidKent  
College**

"Our Governing Body represents all of the College's stakeholders, by challenging the leadership team to deliver the excellent College that Maidstone and Medway deserve".

Martin Cook, Chair of  
Governors



# GOVERNOR FAQs

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON  
BECOMING A GOVERNOR



## WHAT DO GOVERNORS DO?

Governors make an invaluable contribution to the development of excellence in colleges. As a member of the governing board, governors set the mission and strategic direction of the college, and scrutinise its performance in both quality of service and financial performance. Governors are volunteers. Becoming a governor provides many opportunities to contribute to your local community and is an excellent way of developing strategic leadership skills.

## IS IT THE SAME AS SCHOOL GOVERNANCE?

No. It's very different. The principal difference is the legal status of further education (FE) governing bodies as independent corporations under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 and as exempt charities. This passes many of the statutory responsibilities of the local authority to the corporation and provides more freedom and flexibility in governance. This freedom and flexibility means overseeing the College is more like running a large business than a school.

## WHAT IS THE TIME COMMITMENT?

The full Governing body meets for a three-hour meeting at least five times each year, plus a strategic away-day. Governors are also expected to serve on one of our committees which have between three and five meetings each year, and to visit the College once every term for informal contact with students.

Our Clerk will advise you of the calendar of meetings, and will provide you with papers to read in advance of those meetings where applicable.

## DO I BECOME A COLLEGE MANAGER?

No. It is very important that, as a Governor, you understand the difference between the strategic role of the Governing Body and the executive role of the Principal and management team. If you are unclear about this distinction, speak to your clerk or Chair.

## WHAT TRAINING WILL I RECEIVE?

All new governors will receive an induction to help you find your feet and provide the basic tools and information to start the job. You will also be assigned a more experienced Governor to provide one-to-one support in your first year. In addition, there are some key responsibilities of which all governors will need to have a knowledge. These include financial monitoring; teaching and learning and curriculum issues; and the legal areas of safeguarding, equality and diversity and health and safety. For governors wishing to self-study, the Association of Colleges provides online training resources.

## HOW LONG IS A TERM OF OFFICE?

Our Governors commit to a term of four years. Many Governors choose to serve a second term of office, but this is subject to the individual and the Governing Body.

## DO I NEED TO DECLARE INTERESTS?

All governors are required on appointment to declare any interests that may potentially conflict with their role as governor and the interests of the college. These are often financial interests, but can also include membership of or connections with other organisations or interest groups. The Register of Interests covers your close relatives, including your partner. The acid test is whether the other interest might compromise your independent judgement. Once an interest is declared, the corporation will decide whether you will need to withdraw from consideration of any item where a conflict might occur.

## WHY INVOLVE STAFF AND STUDENTS?

It is a statutory requirement for a corporation to have at least one staff and one student governor, and corporations can choose to have more. Unless a corporation modifies its Instrument and Articles to provide otherwise, these categories of governor will be nominated and elected by other staff and students respectively. It is important to note, however, that no governor is permitted to be bound by a mandate, or lobby on behalf of any individual or group and must, at all times, act in the best interests of the college. There are, therefore, limited circumstances under which staff and student governors are automatically required to withdraw from meetings. These are laid out within the Instrument and Articles. Outside these requirements, staff and student governors are to be considered as equal to any other governor and potential conflicts of interest are to be considered and managed by the corporation on a case by case basis.

## WHAT IF I DISAGREE WITH A DECISION?

The corporation is a collective decision-making body, which means that individual governors are bound to abide with a decision, even if they disagree with it, if it has been made reasonably and honestly. If, however, you have very serious concerns about a decision you can make a request to the Chair to put the item back on the agenda at the next meeting.

## LEGAL LIABILITY

Our Governing Body is a corporate body created by an Act of Parliament with its own legal status and powers to enter into contracts and employ staff. Governors are members of the statutory corporation and, in principle, *cannot be individually liable* for the debts of the statutory body.

As long as members ensure that a Corporation does not exceed its powers in law, and as long as members exercise a duty of skill and care, and act reasonably, honestly and prudently, in good faith in the interests of the Corporation, *individual members should not be held personally liable.*

## INSURANCE

The College has indemnity insurance in place that includes coverage for Governors.

## GET IN TOUCH

We hope that this document has been helpful. If you have other questions, please contact our Clerk on 01634 383182 or email [Corine.Burkin@midkent.ac.uk](mailto:Corine.Burkin@midkent.ac.uk)