PROCEDURE FOR THE ELECTION OF PARENT GOVERNORS IN COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS

1. When a parent governor vacancy occurs, the first stage in the procedure for filling that vacancy is for the Headteacher/Chair/Clerk to distribute a letter to the parents and legal guardians of all pupils in the school via their children (one per family unit). The letter should outline the procedure to be adopted. Parents will be asked to declare their interest by submitting a letter of nomination countersigned by at least two sponsors, who should be parents of children currently at the school.

2. If the number of nominations received is equal to or less than the number of vacancies, then those nominees will automatically take up office. Once the successful nominee has been informed, all parents should be notified of their name.

3. Where no nominations are received there are procedures in place to fill the vacancy by other means. Consult your copy of the “Governors’ Handbook” or contact a member of the Governor Support Team who will be happy to go through the procedure with you.

4. In circumstances where there are more nominations than vacancies, there must be a secret ballot. The procedure for which is as follows:

   (i) The Headteacher/Chair/Clerk should inform the candidates that such an election is necessary and ask them to submit by a specified date, if they wish a written statement in support of their nomination. The statement:

      (a) must be limited to one side of A4 paper;

      (b) will be typed by the school in a standard format, preceded by the candidate’s name.

   It should be made clear that candidates are responsible for the contents of their statements and that schools are unable to provide further assistance in the conduct of their election campaigns.

   (ii) As soon as possible following the closing date given for the submission of statements, Headteacher/Chair/Clerk should circulate a letter to all parents and guardians (via the children unless other arrangements have been made with individual parents), informing them that an election is to take place. The letter should specify the precise period during which the ballot papers may be returned and should be accompanied by:

      (a) the candidates’ statements;

      (b) numbered ballot papers showing the candidates’ names with a box alongside in which voters can make their mark. It would be helpful to include a reminder of the number of candidates to be elected i.e. ‘you may vote for one/two/etc candidates’;

      (c) one envelope per household, marked in the top left hand corner ‘BALLOT PAPER – PARENT GOVERNOR ELECTIONS’.

   (iii) Parents should be given the choice of returning their envelopes either by post, via their children or delivered by hand. It would be helpful if a ballot box is placed in a prominent position in school for the duration of the election period.

   (iv) All parents of children who, at the time of the election, are on the school register are entitled to receive a ballot paper. In the light of the Children Act, eligibility to vote has widened to include those with parental responsibility. For example, both the natural mother and father have the right to vote. In addition, a stepfather/stepmother who has parental responsibility also have the right to vote. Parental responsibility implies a degree of permanency rather than, say, looking after a child at the weekend or during holidays.

      Reasonable measures should be taken to ensure that those eligible to vote are informed of their rights. ‘Reasonable’ is not easy to interpret but be wary of rejecting a claim from a parent or other carer who claims the right to vote. Each family unit should receive the appropriate number of ballot papers irrespective of the number of children who are pupils of the school, i.e. one for each parent.

5. Once the specified period for the return of ballot papers has elapsed, the votes cast should be counted. A serving governor (preferably the Chair or Vice Chair) should be asked to supervise the count. The candidate/s receiving the highest number of votes will be elected parent governor/s. In the event of a tie, lots should be drawn.

6. On the completion of the count, the Headteacher/Chair/Clerk should write to all the candidates notifying them of the outcome of the election.
7. The Headteacher/Chair/Clerk should write to all parents informing them of the election result.

8. The Clerk to Governors should send the details of those elected to Governor Support Team on Form GST 15.

9. Any queries relating to the above procedure should be made to Governor Support Team, Children’s Services, Lower East Wing, Parkhouse Building, Baron Way, Carlisle CA6 4SJ. Telephone: 01228 221332.

* DEFINITION OF “PARENT”*

4. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines “parent” to include:

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not; and
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has *parental responsibility* for a child or young person; and
- any person who, although not a natural parent, *has care* of a child or young person