

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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2 January 2025
AQW 19853/22-27

Michelle McIlveen MLA has asked:

To ask the Minister of Education to detail (i) the criteria used when appointing school governors during the current reconstitution process; and (ii) whether the criteria were weighted in reaching a decision.

ANSWER

There are various appointing authorities for the appointment of school governors to school Board of Governors (BoGs). The nomination/appointment of governors is a matter for each appointing authority and therefore different processes are utilised.

As such, my Department does not hold all the requested information in full. However, information has been provided by the Department and the Education Authority (EA) to provide answers on its processes.

In respect of my Department, DE governor appointments to school BoGs are made by the Education Minister. Applicants' school and location preferences, along with the skill requirements and/or views of the BoG/school are taken into consideration to rank candidate(s) for the

Minister's consideration. It is ultimately the Minister's decision as to who is appointed.

In respect of EA, the Education Authority Governor Selection Panels Guidance and Selection Criteria January 2024 has been deposited in the Assembly Library on 20 December 2024. The EA have advised that Selection Criteria are not weighted.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Givan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and a horizontal flourish at the end.

Paul Givan MLA
Minister of Education



Education Authority Governor Selection Panels

Guidance and Selection Criteria

January 2024

School Governance Service

Selection of Education Authority Governors Guidance and Selection Criteria

Purpose of the Document

The following document has been prepared to provide guidance and aid consistency between Education Authority (EA) governor selection meetings.

The guidance will be reviewed and amended as appropriate.

Pre-Panel Actions

School Governance Service officers will undertake a range of pre-panel actions prior to presenting eligible applications to a panel for first consideration.

Where an applicant has declared that they are bankrupt, though not subject to a Bankruptcy Restriction Order, and where they have stated a preference to serve on the Board of Governors of a maintained or voluntary grammar school, the officer will provide the application for consideration by the panel for their next stated, suitable preference(s).

If there is doubt about the suitability for appointment of an applicant(s) at any stage in the process, any relevant information should be escalated for further consideration.

Please note: all conflicts of interest will be considered at selection meetings.

Selection Criteria

As stated in our frequently asked questions, the needs of the school will be paramount when selecting candidates to serve as EA governors.

The following criteria will be applied for eligible applications received.

The panel will look first to see that the applicant:

- has indicated a preference to serve on the named school and / or that their stated preferences match the named school;
- matches a skill or range of skills that EA / named school(s) would consider to be of benefit.
- has indicated any connection with any neighbouring¹, competing² or feeder school.

¹ Neighbouring should be defined differently in urban and rural areas and will be based on knowledge provided to the panel meeting by officers in attendance.

² Based on knowledge provided to the panel meeting by officers in attendance.

- Where an applicant is employed in a neighbouring, competing or feeder school, the panel will not normally recommend appointing the applicant especially where this may be to the exclusion of other equally suitable applicants.
- Where an applicant has stated a preference to serve on 2 (or more) neighbouring, competing or feeder schools, the panel will not normally recommend appointing the applicant to both schools, especially where this may be to the exclusion of other equally suitable applicants.

The panel will also consider any other relevant information, taking account of the needs of the school (*for example; the applicant may have declared a financial interest in the school for which they have stated a preference*).

Secondly, where there are more suitable applicants than available places for EA appointed governors in the named school after applying the criteria above, panels should also consider:

- Any other relevant information, taking into account the needs of the school (*for example; the applicant may have declared a financial interest in the school for which they have stated a preference*).
- The balance of representation of the current Board of Governors (if known), or of those applicants being presented to the panel, to avoid over representation of any group(s) or categories of governor.
- Placing applicants who are currently unplaced before placing applicants who have secured a governor position for 2024–2028 (specific consideration may be given to any EA governors serving in placements for 2024-2028 for which they did not express a first preference).

Conflicts of Interest

‘Anyone offered a school governor appointment must declare any conflicts of interest that might arise. Conflicts of interest are not automatically a barrier to an appointment. However, real, perceived, and potential conflicts of interest must be considered to ensure confidence in the independence and impartiality of the Board of Governors and your position as a member.’ [Becoming a School Governor](#)

Where an applicant has declared that they are employed at the school for which they have expressed a preference to serve, the application will be reviewed during pre-panel actions, and deemed ineligible for that preferred school. All other declared connections with schools will be considered as conflicts of interest and will be forwarded to the relevant panel.

Employees of the Named School

Current employees³ – In accordance with Article 6 (1) (a) of the EA Scheme for the Management of Controlled Schools, any applicant who is employed in or by the school to which they have applied, is disqualified from becoming a member of the board of governors.

Past employees – Where an applicant is a past employee of the school at which they have stated a preference, this could present a clear conflict of interest depending on the capacity in which they were employed, and the time elapsed since their departure.

- Panels will not normally appoint an applicant who has served in the school as vice principal or principal in the past 5 years.
- Panels will not normally appoint an applicant who has been employed in the school in the past 4 years.

Family & Other Relationships⁴

- Panels will not normally appoint an applicant who is related to any other governor serving on the Board of Governors of the same school.
- Panels will not normally appoint an applicant who is directly related to a member of staff at the named school.
- Panels will not appoint an applicant who is related to the principal of the school.

³ Current employee could also include those employed by the school on a temporary basis e.g. substitute teacher at the time of appointment or during the governor term of office.

⁴ Advice from Equality: For the purpose of this Article, a family relationship shall be deemed to exist between a member and a person who is employed or who is an applicant if they are:

- a married couple living together as a married couple; or
- a couple living together in a civil partnership.
- a couple living together as co-habiting partners
- a couple living separately
- or the spouse, civil partner or partner of that person, is the – (a) parent; (b) person with parental responsibility (c) grandparent; (d) grandson or granddaughter; (e) son or daughter; (f) brother or sister; (g) first cousin; (h) uncle or aunt; (i) all equivalent step or blended family relationships; or (j) nephew or niece (k) next of kin; of the member, or of the spouse, civil partner or partner of the member.

Where all else is equal and where the panel has been unable to distinguish between two or more applicants, using all information available and in line with all the criteria above, then it has the option to use random selection to match an applicant to a placement. The method of random selection has been pre-determined by the School Governance Team.