

## **The duty on governing bodies to hold meetings with parents**

With effect from 4<sup>th</sup> May 2013, there is no longer a requirement for governing bodies to hold an Annual Parent's Meeting. New statutory guidance has been issued by Welsh Government (guidance document no. 104/2013)

Parents now have the right to request up to three meetings per year with the governing body to discuss issues which concern them. Parents must request a meeting by means of a petition, which must meet four criteria:

1. **The petition must contain the signatures of the required number of parents of registered pupils.** The detail and definitions are contained in section 1.3 of the guidance, but in brief: the required minimum number is whichever is lower of the parents of 10% of registered pupils or the parents of 30 registered pupils. Two parents of one registered pupil count for one signature; one parent of three pupils counts as three signatures.
2. **The meeting must be for the purpose of discussing matters relating to the school.** It cannot be about individual pupil progress, or to air grievances against members of staff or the governing body.
3. **There will be no more than three meetings held in the school year in which the petition is received.** This criterion refers only to meetings requested by parents. The GB may choose to hold meetings with parents for other reasons, but these will not count towards the limit of three meetings.
4. **There must be sufficient school days left in the school year to allow a meeting to be held by the end of a 25 day period.** A petition must be received at least 25 days before the end of the school year. The guidance explains in detail how the timescales are counted from receipt of a petition.

Governing bodies may decline a request for a meeting if they judge that the stated purpose does not fit the criteria. If parents wish to challenge a refusal, they must do so through the school's complaints procedures.

Governing bodies should not need to convene a meeting to assess whether the statutory requirements have been met. This task can be delegated to a specific governor or governors. If a petition is deemed to have met the statutory requirements, the governing body must notify parents of the date of the meeting and matters to be discussed as soon as is reasonably possible. The guidance sets out how parents should be notified, and also says that governing bodies should draw up procedures for the conduct of the meeting. These should not conflict with the statutory guidance.

Governing bodies must ensure that parents are made aware of their rights to petition a meeting using section 94 of the Act, by the end of October of each school year. Appendix B of the guidance document provides a sample letter which GBs can customise for their own school. It can be sent to parents as hard copy, or electronically.

The requirement for governing bodies to produce an annual report for parents' remains. Other requirements to hold meetings with parents, such as to discuss the inspection report following an Estyn inspection remain unchanged.

Governing bodies are free to continue to hold meetings with parents if they wish, and it is expected that GBs will continue to communicate and engage with parents over the school year. Informing parents of their rights to petition a meeting should not hinder or replace the established channels of communication.

**Link to guidance document 104/2013:**

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/130503-statutory-guidance-parents-meetings-en.pdf>

**Reference:** Section 94(13) of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.