

An interview with a school governor from minority ethnic background- Daniel Krzyszcak

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Key:

CP; [Catalin Popsor](#), placement student, ICOS

DK; [Daniel Krzyszcak](#), school governor and ICOS manager



CP: First of all, if you would like to tell me more about how you found out about this opportunity?

DK: From an existing governor, the board at the Hudson Road School was looking for someone from the community to become a community governor. The application wasn't difficult.

CP: What made you apply for this role?

DK: To try, find out if I can help develop the school, and if this can help me develop as a person as well.

CP: How long have you been involved in this role?

DK: Around 6 years, it's been a continuous commitment. There was a reapplication process every 2 years, and the test is similar in difficulty each time. People that apply for this opportunity need an Enhanced DBS check.

CP: Did you need/ receive any training from the governing body?

DK: Every year in Sunderland for all governors there are training opportunities: Governors receive a booklet with all training available. They attended sessions all over Sunderland, depending on the topic.

CP: Were you made aware of the role and the governing body code of conduct?

DK: Yes

CP: How often do you attend the meetings?

DK: There are 2 different committees in the school: one for finance and one for the curriculum (standards and evaluation). Governors that are not part of any committee can attend general meetings/ every term (3-4 times a year) . If people are in a committee, they usually attend 6-8 meetings/year. Also, even if they are not officially part of the committee, they can still attend meetings.

CP: What are the main topics discussed in a meeting?

DK: Main topic discussed is the curriculum, how the school and classes work. Governors can do observation of classes (outside of the meetings), and then bring the observations to the meetings. The discussions were productive on this topic at the meetings.

The way the policies are handled:

Proposal on policies come from the head teacher. The governing committee gets to vote on the policies.

CP: What are the main issues that you encountered?

DK: It can be a time-consuming activity (lots of documents to read and understand, learning about Ofsted, also policies- to check and adopt).

Other situations could be supporting the head teacher in issues with staff.

CP: Are there situations where the headteacher/school leadership needs to be held accountable?

DK: Yes. The governing body delegates responsibility to the head teacher, and they check what the head teacher is doing.

CP: Was there engagement with the parents/wider community/staff?

DK: During the meetings, school governors engage with the teachers that are also part of the governing body. Also, there are representatives from parents in the governing body.

CP: What knowledge/skills/experience was useful for this position?

DK:

- a. Knowledge: community engagement
- b. Skills: listening, committing to reading the papers/documents, ability to learn on the spot.
- c. Experience: understanding how the community works especially in a school that has international students/pupils.

CP: What type of governor position do you have?

- DK:
- a. Co-opted (community gov.) x
 - b. Foundation (preserve the religious character of the school)
 - c. Parent governor
 - d. Staff
 - e. Associate (no voting rights on full gov. Board, but can vote on committees that they were appointed to)
 - d. Local authority
 - e. Trustee/Director in Academy schools

CP: Were you part of a committee?

DK: Yes, the Standards and evaluation committee.

CP: Did you encounter the situation of electing a new governor? What skills did the governing body need for the new governor?

DK: When the governing body looks to fill a vacant position, they usually try to assess the person and their skills.

CP: How did you find working with the other governors on the board?

DK: It was a good collaboration, there is a shared understanding of how the school works, and people can share additional info from their unique perspective.

CP: Some final thoughts on why people should undertake this opportunity?

DK: Being involved helps you understand where the school stands; you learn as you progress in this role. Contact the local school if they have a place for you, check it, see how it goes. It can be scary at the beginning, but there is a lot of training and support, from the school/head teacher, from the governing body and from the main organization that oversees/manages the school governing bodies in Sunderland, which is Together for Children.