

School Improvement
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Governors' News

A Termly Newsletter for Liverpool Governors



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Liverpool Learning Partnership



100% Attendance Awards

Working with School Improvement Liverpool and the Families Programme, we recently held a fantastic event with the Lord Mayor in the Town Hall for children who had 100% attendance throughout their time in either primary or secondary school. One pupil managed to be in school every day from Reception to Year 11! All the pupils received certificates, medals and a Kindle in recognition of this amazing achievement.

Whole school approaches to mental health and wellbeing

Thank you to all schools who completed the survey on school approaches to mental health and wellbeing. The findings are currently being analysed and a report will be published shortly.

Thanks to Archbishop Beck!

The Finance team at Archbishop Beck have held the LLP accounts and managed them on our behalf until recently. Many thanks for their untiring support. LLP finances are now managed via a service agreement with SIL.

Multi Academy Trust

We are currently working with the Local Authority, SIL and other partners to consider the formation of a Multi Academy Trust.

Arts and Culture

The Liverpool Cultural Education Partnership is now in full swing with schools and a wide range of cultural partners working together. The strategic plan is in place and we are leading the way in making our city a foremost Artsmark city in the UK. We have recently enlisted five schools in the Cultural Citizens Programme with Curious Minds. More young people will be given the opportunity to engage with the arts and work towards Arts Award.

Alice Demba, our Cultural Education Ambassador, will soon have an intern working with her on communications. For more information on our cultural initiatives contact Alice at: ademba.llp@gmail.com.

School to school support

The Partnership continues to broker support for primary schools through the school to school support protocol. To date this year, we have allocated all but £50,000 of the budget. Schools are reporting clear benefits from the support put in place and impact templates are being completed by all schools that are being supported.

It's your partnership....

Please contact me to discuss any support you would like or any initiative you wish to be involved with. Almost all Liverpool schools have now joined LLP and we want to serve everyone as best we can.
Elaine Rees, CEO, ereesllp@gmail.com

Coasting Schools

What are 'coasting' schools?

During 2016, the government defined a new category of schools eligible for intervention: coasting schools. A school could be defined as coasting if, over a three-year period, performance data showed it had failed to ensure that pupils had reached their potential.

The 'coasting' definition

For primary schools:

- In 2016, fewer than 85% of children achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Average progress made by pupils is below -2.5 in English reading or -2.5 in mathematics or -3.5 in English writing.
- and
- In 2014 and 2015, fewer than 85% of pupils achieved level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics and below the median percentage of pupils made expected progress in all of reading, writing and mathematics.

As an example, this means that if a primary school where the median percentage of pupils made expected progress in reading in 2014, it could not then be 'coasting' in 2016.

For secondary schools:

- In 2016, the school's progress 8 score is below -0.25 and the upper band of the 95% confidence interval is below zero.

and

- In 2014 and 2015, fewer than 60% of pupils achieved 5 A*-C including English and mathematics, and the number of pupils who made expected progress in English and mathematics was less than the national median percentage.

A school will have to be below the coasting definition in three consecutive years to be defined as coasting.

This definition applies to both maintained schools and academies. Certain types of school are not subject to the 'coasting' definition: maintained nurseries, infant schools, special schools, and pupil referral units.

What happens when your school is defined as 'coasting'?

There is no automatic route for schools whose performance falls within the 'coasting' definition. Although LA's also have powers to intervene in 'coasting' schools, Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) will be primarily responsible for intervention and will have discretion to decide on the most appropriate course of action.

When a school has been notified by an RSC that it has fallen within the 'coasting' definition, the governing board must inform the parents and keep them up to date with what is being done to address this.

Step 1: The RSC will make an assessment of what intervention is required

RSC will consider the full range of factors affecting school performance. The Schools Causing Concern guidance groups these into two broad categories:

1) Performance and other quantitative data

- Educational performance data for that school, further to the data that meant the school was identified as coasting;
- Performance of the school in relation to schools in similar contexts and pupils with similar starting points;
- The educational performance data of groups of pupils with particular characteristics e.g. disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Other data about the school, such as pupil cohort size, attendance and mobility of pupils (i.e. the number of pupils who joined and left the school) and what impact that may have had on the school's data.

2) Other information about the school, and its plans and capacity to improve

- The school's plan to improve its educational performance and pupil progress, whether that plan is sufficient and has the rigour and credibility to bring about the necessary improvement of the school;
- Capacity to deliver against that plan, taking into account recent Ofsted

judgements (especially on leadership and management)

- The effectiveness of the school's pupil premium strategy.

The process will be a dialogue between the RSC and school leaders. The school's governing board, as the accountable body for the school's performance, should be integral to this dialogue. The RSC may ask for relevant information to make an assessment and the governing board should make every effort to accommodate requests.

If, after reviewing the evidence, the RSC concludes that no further action is required, either because the school is supporting pupils well or has sufficient plan and capacity to improve, the RSC will continue to monitor the school (Step 3).

Step 2: Potential intervention Maintained schools

If the RSC decides that further action is required to improve a 'coasting' school, there are a range of options available to them:

- Additional support and challenge e.g. through Teaching School Alliances, partnership with other schools, or National Leaders of Education.
- Require the governing body to enter into arrangements. This may take the form of:
 - A contract for advisory services.
 - Collaboration with the governing body of another school.
 - Collaboration with a further education body.
 - Creation of or joining a federation.

Before doing so, the RSC must consult the governing body, the appropriate diocesan authority (if applicable), and (in the case of a foundation or voluntary school) the person or persons by whom the foundation governors are appointed.

- Appoint additional governors or an Interim Executive Board (IEB). Again, the RSC must consult as above.
- Issue the school with an academy order. There is no requirement for a consultation to be carried out unless the school is a foundation or voluntary school that has a foundation, in which case the RSC must consult the trustees, the person(s) by whom the foundation governors are appointed, and (if applicable) the appropriate religious body.

When an academy order has been issued, the governing body and LA are under a duty to take all reasonable steps to facilitate the conversion. The RSC can direct the governing body and LA to take specified steps within specified timescales.

The RSC will identify a sponsor for the school and that sponsor will be under a duty to communicate to parents about their plans for improving the school before the conversion takes place.

Academies

If the RSC considers that action is required to improve the performance of a 'coasting' academy, they may issue the academy trust with a termination warning notice. This will detail specific actions which the academy trust must take to improve its performance by a specified date e.g. working with a particular school improvement partner. The academy trust will be required to respond to this warning notice.

Where the academy fails to comply with the termination warning notice, the funding agreement for that academy may be terminated. If the RSC decides to terminate the academy's funding agreement, in most cases they will identify a new sponsor to take on responsibility for the academy. For stand-alone academies, this will usually mean joining a multi-academy trust (MAT), while those which are already part of a MAT will usually be 'rebrokered' to join a different MAT.

In exceptional cases where the academy is not viable in the long term, the funding agreement will be terminated in order to close the school.

Step 3: ongoing monitoring

Whatever course of action the RSC chooses, they will continue to monitor the school's progress. This may include collecting further information and/or visits to the school by the RSC, their staff, or a representative. While the school's performance meets the 'coasting' definition, the RSC may revise their decision about the support and challenge required by the school at any time.

Engaging Parents

Engaging with parents is an excellent way for governors to get to know their school – its strengths, its weaknesses and its community. Soliciting the views of parents informs the governing board's strategic planning and gives parents the opportunity to help shape their child's education.

Governors may want to consider:

- What are the issues, changes or opportunities that parents need to be told about or involved in?
- What means or channels exist or may be created to communicate with parents and which would be the most effective?
- What are the key dates by which this needs to be done over the school year?
- What is the role of the governing board in communicating, as opposed to the headteacher and other members of staff?

The parent community is often a diverse audience with a range of needs, interests and influences. It's important to ensure that you analyse this target audience to know how you will reach as many as possible and know what engagement you need in order to achieve your mission.

Governing boards are much better equipped to hold school leaders to account for the performance of their school when they know the school's strengths and weaknesses, including its relationship with parents.

Governors need information to help them judge how well the school is performing against the criteria that the board and senior leaders have agreed. The views of parents are a vital part of that evidence base.

What information your school currently holds about parents and what else you may need to find out will emerge from your annual planning process. Some considerations are:

- Do we know how parents feel about the school?
- Do we know the opinions of all groups of parents or just some?
- Do parents know what we expect of their children?
- Do parents understand what and how their children are learning?
- Do parents know how they can best support their children's education?
- How do we support parents who don't know how to support their children's learning?
- Are there specific elements of our school improvement plan that require parental engagement to be successful?

Running a regular survey is one way of informing your strategy and gauging attitudes. One approach is to ask parents to what extent they agree or disagree with a number of statements, such as: (See next page)

1. I am made to feel welcome when I come into school
2. I find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child
3. I am part of the school community
4. The school is effective at communicating; I get the information I need when I need it
5. I understand what my child is learning and how they are being taught
6. I know how to support my child's learning at home
7. The school helps me to support my child's learning
8. My relationship with the school could be improved
9. I want to get involved in school life
10. I want to have a say in how the school is run
11. The school asks me for my opinion
12. I have attended a PTA activity or event

Getting a high response rate to surveys from parents is not always easy. Many schools promote surveys with letters home, the school website, parent email and social media.

Events

From coffee mornings to parents' evenings, events are a good opportunity to explain the work of the school to parents, quash rumours, gauge reactions and invite responses.

Social media

The school should take a position on whether or not it will engage with parents through social media. For example, the school might have an 'official' Facebook and/or Twitter account for news but could also use them to raise awareness about consultations and options for parental engagement. However, if the school is considering using such platforms to glean views, they need to be aware of the risk of criticism, and how to encourage parents to use the formal channels.

Acting on the results and reporting

Parents will want to know what happened as a result of their engagement. In short – was it worth the effort? Is the school listening to us? For each specific exercise, the governing board could consider how the school will report the results. For example, using the school newsletter, website, parent email, text message or social media account.

In addition, governing boards could consider producing an annual report for parents, including on strategic developments and demonstrating how the governing board acted on parental views to improve the school: 'you said/ we did'. Careful timely communication is likely to lead to more support for changes and reduce the number of complaints.

Liverpool Schools' Parliament

Make Your Mark Campaign 2016

Make Your Mark is the largest consultation exercise with young people aged 11-18 within the UK. This year a total of 978,216 young people from across the country took part in the annual Make Your Mark ballot to decide what issues the UK Youth Parliament should consider as the subject for its campaign for 2017. Liverpool exceeded its target of 8,100 votes with 10,498 being cast (27.10%). The top five issues that emerged were:

- A curriculum to prepare us for life: schools should cover topics including finance, sex and relationships and politics in the curriculum;
- Tackling racism and religious discrimination, particularly against people who are Muslim or Jewish: all young people should work together to combat racism and other forms of discrimination, and ensure we know the dangers of such hatred;
- Transport: make public transport cheaper, better and accessible for all;
- Votes at 16: give 16 and 17 year olds the right to vote in all elections/referendums;
- Stop cuts that affect the NHS: funding that affects the NHS shouldn't be cut. We must keep up vital services to protect young people.

Manifesto 2016-17

Earlier this term MSPs from both Houses of the Liverpool Schools' Parliament drew up their manifesto for 2016-17. In total, over 270 pupils from 58 different educational establishments met with representatives from a number of organisations and agencies such as Merseyside Police, Merseyside Fire and Rescue, City Safe, CAMHS, Healthy Schools, Public Health, Merseytravel, Bullybusters and Ariel Trust.

UK Youth Parliament Annual Sitting

Members of UK Youth Parliament met in the House of Commons on 11 November to debate the five issues above. Caitlin Cavanagh, from Archbishop Blanch School, was elected by other MYPs from the North West as one of the debate leads and spoke at the sitting which was chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons, Rt Hon John Bercow MP. Following the debate, 'Votes at 16' and 'A curriculum to prepare us for life' emerged as the two national campaigns for UKYP for 2017.

Children's Rights and Brexit: Perspectives and Prospects

Seven MSPs took part in this event organised by the European Children's Rights Unit of Liverpool University. Although not eligible to vote in the national referendum, two MSPs explained why they supported the Remain and Leave camps respectively. MSPs gave their views on how Brexit might affect education opportunities, youth employment and the environment.

Athenaeum Debates

Four primary schools took part in Athenaeum Debates on 04 October. All who took part not only showed excellent speaking and debating skills but that they had put in much research on topics being debated. These were:

- The School Day should be from 9.00 am until 5.00 pm (resolution was defeated);
- There should be no national testing in schools until Year 11 (passed);
- Charities and individuals should not be allowed to ask for money in the street (defeated);
- There should be votes at 16 (passed);
- Those aged over 66 should not be allowed to vote in elections in the UK (defeated).

EurVoice Liverpool 2016



On 28 September Schools' Parliament and European Youth Parliament UK jointly held their seventh EurVoice Liverpool event. MSPs and alumni of EYPUK led four workshops looking at Mental Health, Youth Employment, STEM (science, technology and maths) and the voting age.



Workshops were attended by around 110 young people and were followed by a 'Question Time' session. Panelists for this were Cllrs Tom Crone and Richard Kemp and Ananda Mohan of Liverpool University's Student Union.

Obesity strategy

Nearly a third of children aged 2 to 15 are overweight or obese, with younger generations becoming obese at earlier ages and staying obese for longer. Reducing obesity levels saves lives as obesity doubles the risk of dying prematurely. Obese adults are seven times more likely to become a type 2 diabetic than adults of a healthy weight. Not only are obese people more likely to get physical health conditions like heart disease, they are also more likely to be living with conditions like depression.

Obesity rates are highest for children from the most deprived areas and this is getting worse. Children aged 5 from the poorest income groups are twice as likely to be obese compared to their most well-off counterparts and by age 11 they are three times as likely.

Obesity is a complex problem with many drivers, including behaviour, environment, genetics and culture. However, at its root obesity is caused by an energy imbalance: taking in more energy through food than we use through activity. Physical activity is associated with numerous health benefits for children, such as muscle and bone strength, health and fitness, improved quality of sleep and maintenance of a healthy weight. There is also evidence that physical activity and participating in organised sports and after school clubs is linked to improved academic performance.

Long-term, sustainable change will only be achieved through the active engagement of schools, communities, families and individuals.

The government has released Childhood obesity: a plan for action which introduces some important initiatives that will affect schools, particularly primary schools.

All schools

- There will be a levy on the soft drinks industry introduced in the Finance Bill 2017. The levy will see the primary PE and Sports Premium doubled and a further £10 million invested in school healthy breakfast clubs.
- The government will invest £300 million in walking and cycling, including encouraging walking and cycling to school.
- The secretary of state will lead a campaign encouraging all schools, including academies and free schools, to commit to the School Food Standards.
- Ofsted will undertake a thematic review on obesity, healthy eating and physical activity in schools in 2017.
- Training will be introduced for school nurses and health visitors to help them recognise the signs of obesity early on.

Primary schools

- Primary schools will be expected to provide 30 minutes of physical activity a day to children through “active break times, PE, extra-curricular clubs, active lessons, or other sport and physical activity events”. The government will be developing an online tool to help schools plan for at least 30 minutes of exercise a day. Parents are expected to support an additional 30 minutes of exercise outside of school.
- To help schools understand what initiatives are available for Primary PE and Sports Premium, Public Health England (PHE) will be developing advice for 2017/18 to help schools work with school nurses, health centres and healthy weight teams to help children develop a healthier lifestyle.
- Primary schools can sign up to a new healthy rating scheme from September 2017. This scheme will help schools take evidence-based approaches to pupil health, to communicate with parents and to signpost parents to information/ advice on keeping their family healthy. The scheme will be mentioned in the Ofsted handbook and Ofsted will consider the healthy rating scheme as a source of evidence for promoting healthy eating and physical activity in schools.

Early Years

- The Children’s Food Trust has been commissioned by PHE to produce revised menus which will be incorporated into official voluntary guidance for early years settings. This will be accompanied by a campaign to raise awareness of the guidelines in 2017.
- The UK Chief Medical Officers’ guidance for physical activity in early years will be incorporated into the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework.

Publishing information about governors

Information for Edubase

From September it became compulsory to send information about governors to the government data website, Edubase. Much, but not all, of this information is open to public scrutiny.

The information required for the public part of Edubase is fairly simple:

- the full name of each governor
- the body that appointed them
- the date of their appointment
- the date their term of office ends, or ended if they ceased to be a governor during the current school year
- for maintained schools, whether they are the chair of governors or a member of the governing body.

However, there is additional information for each governor which will not be made public but is required by the Department for Education:

- postcode
- date of birth
- previous names
- nationality
- the chair's email address.

Information for the school website

The duty of governing bodies to publish information about their members extends further than this. The following has to be published on the school's website:

- the structure and remit of the governing body (Academies to also include Trust members and board) and any committees, and the full name of the chair of each;
- for each governor/member/trustee who has served at any point over the past 12 months:
 - full name
 - date of appointment
 - term of office
 - date they stepped down (where applicable)
 - who appointed them
- relevant business and pecuniary interests (as recorded in the register of interests) including governance roles in other educational institutions

- any material interests arising from relationships between governors or between governors and school staff including spouses, partners and relatives (an Academy has discretion over whether to publish its full register of interests including senior employees and close family members on its website.)
- their attendance record at governing board and committee meetings over the last academic year.

Governing bodies should also publish this information for associate members, making clear whether they have voting rights on any of the committees to which they have been appointed.

The information should be “readily accessible” meaning that it should be on a webpage without the need to download or open a separate document.

Conflicts of interest

Not acting for personal gain has always been a fundamental principle of school governance. The School Governance (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) (England) Regulations 2013 defines a pecuniary interest as including “an interest in a contract or a proposed contract where:

- i. a relevant person was nominated or appointed to office by a person with whom the contract was made or is proposed to be made;
- ii. a relevant person is a business partner of a person with whom the contract was made; or

iii. a relative of a relevant person (including the relevant person’s spouse, civil partner or someone living with the relevant person as if the other person were the relevant person’s spouse or civil partner), to the knowledge of the relevant person had, or would be treated as having, such an interest.

In other words, you also have an interest if someone close to you is directly involved. Interests that must be declared include those of family members if they could gain a financial benefit from the school. The governing board may decide that any such individuals or employees should be listed in the register of interests. If they do, then the published version of the register does not have to include these names, but may do so if the governors decide that it should.

Having an interest does not prevent the person from being involved in a contract between their business and the school, but they must not participate or vote when awarding it is considered. They must also not benefit from any terms that are better than those that would be offered to a person with no connection to the school. Where appropriate, normal tendering procedures would have to be followed.

Regulations also exclude a staff member who is a governor from taking part in the discussion of the pay or appraisal of any other staff member, including the headteacher.

Standard for teachers' professional development

The new academic year saw a new DfE Standard for Teachers' Professional Development in place for all schools in England. The standard was put together by an independent group comprising teachers, school leaders, school business managers and researchers with a wide range of experience who reviewed existing advice and standards from across the world and across different professions.

As the Teachers' Standards set out, teachers make the education of their pupils their first concern, and are accountable for achieving the highest possible standards in work and conduct. The Teachers' Standards set out a number of expectations about professional development; namely, that teachers should:

- keep their knowledge and skills as teachers up-to-date and be self-critical;
- take responsibility for improving teaching through appropriate professional development, responding to advice and feedback from colleagues;
- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how pupils learn and how this has an impact on teaching;
- have a secure knowledge of the relevant subject(s) and curriculum areas;

- reflect systematically on the effectiveness of lessons and approaches to teaching; and
- know and understand how to assess the relevant subject and curriculum areas.

Effective professional development for teachers is a core part of securing effective teaching. It cannot exist in isolation, rather it requires a pervasive culture of scholarship with a shared commitment for teachers to support one another to develop so that pupils benefit from the highest quality teaching. The thousands of professional decisions that must be made every day need to be informed by the best evidence, knowledge and professional wisdom.

Not all professional development is equally effective. Helping teachers to improve their practice takes thought, planning and effort. It requires headteachers who prioritise not only the operational aspects of teacher development but also, as Ofsted put it in their September 2015 handbook, "a motivated, respected and effective teaching staff" in "a culture that enables pupils and staff to excel".

While professional development can take many forms, the best available research shows that the most effective professional development practices share similar characteristics. Effective professional development should be seen as a key driver not only of staff development, but also of recruitment, retention, wellbeing and school improvement.

The Standard

Professional development should:

1. Have a focus on improving and evaluating pupil outcomes.
2. Be underpinned by robust evidence and expertise.
3. Include collaboration and expert challenge.
4. Have programmes that are sustained over time.

And all this is underpinned by, and requires that:

5. Professional development must be prioritised by school leadership.

1) Professional development should have a clear focus on improving and evaluating pupil outcomes

Professional development is most effective when activities have a clear purpose and link to pupil outcomes. In particular, effective professional development has explicit relevance to participants.

This means the activities are designed around:

- individual teachers' existing experience, knowledge and needs;
- the context and day-to-day experiences of teachers and their schools;
- the desired outcomes for pupils;
- ensures individual activities link logically to the intended pupil outcomes;
- involves ongoing evaluation of how changes in practice are having an impact on pupil outcomes.

2) Professional development should be underpinned by robust evidence and expertise

Professional development is most effective when informed by robust evidence, which can be from a range of sources. In particular, effective professional development:

- develops practice and theory together;
- links pedagogical knowledge with subject/specialist knowledge;
- draws on the evidence base, including high-quality academic research, and robustly evaluated approaches and teaching resources;
- is supported by those with expertise and knowledge to help participants improve their understanding of evidence; and,
- draws out and challenges teachers'

3) Professional development should include collaboration and expert challenge

Professional development that aims to change teachers' practice is most effective when it includes collaborative activities with a focus on the intended pupil outcomes. In particular, effective professional development:

- builds-in peer support for problem solving;
- includes focussed discussion about practice and supporting groups of pupils with similar needs;
- challenges existing practice, by raising expectations and bringing in new perspectives;
- includes support from someone in a coaching and/or mentoring role to provide modelling and challenge.

4) Professional development programmes should be sustained over time

Professional development is most effective when activities form part of a sustained programme, typically for more than two terms. In particular, effective professional development:

- is iterative, with activities creating a rhythm of ongoing support and follow-up activities;
- may include complementary one-off activities as part of a wider coherent package;
- includes opportunities for experimentation, reflection, feedback and evaluation.

5) Professional development must be prioritised by school leadership

Professional development is most effective when it is led well as part of a wider culture of evidence-informed reflection and discussion of teaching practice. In particular, effective leadership of professional development:

- is clear about how it improves pupil outcomes;
- complements a clear, ambitious curriculum and vision for pupil success;
- involves leaders modelling & championing effective professional development as an expectation for all;
- ensures that sufficient time and resource is available;
- balances school, subject and individual teachers' priorities;
- develops genuine professional trust

The Standard for Teachers' Professional development can be accessed via the www.gov.uk website.

The National Workforce Agreement places responsibility on the governing board for 'ensuring that the Headteacher has a reasonable workload in support of a reasonable work-life balance, having regard for health' and 'welfare and providing Headteachers with dedicated time that recognises their significant leadership responsibilities for the school'.

As part of a Headteacher wellbeing initiative, LGF has worked with the Liverpool Primary Headteachers Association reflecting on elements of governance that can make a Head's life more difficult and, sometimes, more stressful, along with suggested solutions arising from two conferences on this subject.

1) Meetings

Attendance at meetings can be very demanding on a Head's time. Feedback from our conferences showed that the frequency of governing board (GB) meetings ranged from three to six per year. A number of schools have abandoned the traditional committee set up in favour of full GB meetings. This allows all governors to receive the same information at the same time and removes duplication and repetition of discussions.

For those GBs who had retained a committee structure, the number of committees ranged from one to six, though most had two committees focused largely around Standards and Resources. A high number of committees is clearly a significant demand on a headteacher's time (and

governors) and it was felt that this could be reviewed to become more focused.

It is important that committees have full delegated powers so that decisions do not have to be ratified at full GB meetings.

There were a number of recommendations on how this could be improved:

- No meeting should last longer than two hours.
- The length of meetings is often down to the Chair's skills in keeping it tight.
- Agenda items should have a rough time allocation to assist the Chair.
- Staff making presentations should be made aware of what time allocation they have to enable them to prepare accordingly – 10-15 minutes seemed appropriate.
- Sending out all papers a week before the meeting (a statutory requirement) means they won't have to be read out by the presenter and the Chair can move straight to discussion and questions. Governors must play their part in this by reading all papers in advance of the meeting and coming armed with questions and comments.
- Any Other Business should be restricted to emergency items which have arisen after the agenda has been sent out.

GBs have to choose a day and time that gets the best attendance and it's often difficult to agree a day and time that suits a dozen or so diaries. The starting time of meetings ranged from 9.00am to 7.00pm. It was felt that a two hour (or longer) meeting starting at 7.00pm following an already long day was unfair on Heads and LGF would recommend that no meeting starts later than 6.00pm. Where a late start is unavoidable, GBs could consider granting a half-day off in-lieu for the Head and any staff attendees.

Despite a legal requirement for employers to give employees who are school governors in maintained schools 'reasonable time off' to carry out their duties we know that some governors find it difficult to leave work early to attend a meeting. With this in mind a number of schools alternate between day and evening meetings.

The time taken for headteachers to prepare for meetings varied considerably. Some Heads said they spent one or two hours per meeting whilst others reported that it took as much as four days, when including writing the Head's Report. It was felt there was scope for some or much of this to be delegated to other members of school staff – SLT, PA or admin – and it should not be assumed that the Head has to prepare (or present) her/his report.

Most governors felt that their Head should attend all full GB meetings where possible. This was not deemed as important for committees where another staff member could represent the school – for example, the School Business Manager could lead in a Finance Committee meeting.

Many governors felt it would be beneficial to know what their Head's working week looked like and to receive a typical overview of what a Head deals with each day. Some GBs allow their HT to work from home for half a day a week so s/he can work uninterrupted.

2) The Chair

It is good practice for the Head and Chair to meet on a regular scheduled basis. Many governors felt that governance could not be effective if this relationship was not there. Heads must be able to run ideas past the Chair. We found quite a variation in the number of times Heads and Chairs met each other: weekly, fortnightly or half-termly with some restricted to phone or email contact. Some governors felt that if there are problems in arranging suitable times to meet due to other commitments of the Chair, the Chair should consider his/her position.

Most Heads confide in their Chair. With this in mind, LGF is of the opinion that it is not good practice to be Chair (or even a governor) whilst related to a member of school staff: we heard of one Chair who shared confidential matters with his wife who worked in the school.

As with any aspect of school life, the role of the governor has changed considerably over the past few years and it is important that governors consider what training and development is required to ensure their effectiveness. LGF is surprised at how few governors attend training or our own conferences (which are free!). Some Heads admitted that a source of stress was whether their governors would be able to convince Ofsted that they are effective – failure to do so could result in weakening the judgement on leadership and management of the school.

Parent governors

Of all the different governor categories, parent governors give Heads the most cause for concern. There were examples cited of parent governors having their own agenda, only being interested in matters that directly affect their child, lacking appreciation or understanding of collective responsibility and accountability, breaching confidentiality and, on occasion, risking reputational damage to the school through misuse of social media (including openly criticising their school on Facebook).

Although in extreme circumstances GBs can suspend a governor (an appointed governor can also be removed), LGF feels the long term solution lies in providing prospective governors with comprehensive, relevant information on the role and responsibilities of a governor. This would go to parents along with nomination details. Once elected, there should be a thorough induction process so that all new governors knows what is expected of them. In addition, a clear code of

conduct should be adopted by all governing boards (the National Governors' Association has a good one) that sets out expected standards of behaviour and professionalism.

A governor-Head relationship based on understanding and respect of each other's roles would help to reduce stress for HTs. The days of a governing board merely having a rubber-stamping role have long gone. Heads appreciate that governors must challenge school leaders and hold them to account, part of the skill of being an effective governor is to be able to do this in a professional manner. Governors can contribute to their Head's welfare by seeking to govern according to the seven principles of public life – selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

The topics chosen for this year's conference were based on feedback from governors at previous LGF events. We chose two key topics:

- Headteacher Appraisals, delivered by guest speaker: Amanda Patmore, NLG and chair of governors at St Michael in the Hamlet Primary School; and
- Philosophy for Children (P4C): Unleashing Potential, delivered by Julie McCann, School Improvement Liverpool.

Headteacher appraisals are both a sensitive and challenging responsibility for Governors. They need to be well planned and appropriately carried out to achieve constructive and purposeful outcomes. P4C is an enquiry based pedagogy, where students take the lead and the teaching style is facilitative. The foundations of P4C are creative, critical, caring and collaborative thinking. P4C drives questioning, reasoning and independent learning skills and, as research shows, it accelerates academic progress.

It was rather disappointing that only 20 governors attended compared to the 48 who attended last year's conference. However, governors attending made up for this through their enthusiasm, interaction and engagement in the various group discussions and exercises.

The two guest speakers delivered excellent presentations, which were well received by the delegates. Moreover, it ensured the delegates acquired a good understanding of the how to conduct a purposeful and meaningful Headteacher appraisal and the positive impact of adopting the P4C approach in lessons.

Some of the feedback we received:

"I learnt how to approach our next Headteacher's appraisal"

"It has given me confidence and an understanding of Headteacher's appraisal"

"I have understanding of how it is possible to do P4C and why it is beneficial – previously sceptical"

"Retested my awareness regarding Headteacher appraisal. Now have a grasp and understanding of P4C"

"It was good to have the opportunity to think and discuss ideas for rotation of governor roles"

"I gained more information regarding Headteacher appraisal and how it looks, the different barriers and how to deal with them. Learnt what P4C is and how to reproduce it in my school"

"Take ideas back, particularly regarding rotating roles"

"Propose to Governing Body the need to review the main targets for Head"

“Take minutes during the Appraisal committee deliberations”

“More training by LA to cover succession planning in the Appraisal Board”

“I will attend more conferences”

It was clear from the informal discussions at the end of the conference and from the positive feedback on the evaluation forms that this was a most successful conference and delegates gained maximum benefit from attendance.

LGF would like to record our thanks and appreciation to our two excellent guest speakers: Amanda Patmore and Julie McCann. The delivery of their sessions helped to stimulate the group discussions and participate in the exercises, which significantly contributed to our understanding of these important topics and thus ensured this was a worthy event.

David Blythe
Hon Secretary



Courses for Spring 2017

Termly Briefing for Chairs

This meeting is open to Chairs, or representatives, of all Governing Bodies. Councillor Nick Small, Assistant Mayor of Liverpool & Cabinet Member - Education, Employment & Skills and Colette O'Brien, Director of Children's Services will be present at the meeting.

Thursday 12 January
6.00pm to 8.00pm

Ref: C17/01

Cost: Free

Termly Briefing for Clerks

Our termly meeting for clerks to governing boards and/or committees includes briefings and discussion on current issues as well as an opportunity to share good practice and raise queries.

Tuesday 24 January
10.00am to 12noon

Ref: C17/04

Cost: Free

Ofsted Inspections

This course will cover:

- The framework for inspections
- The inspection process
- How is governance inspected?
- What will the Inspector ask me?

Thursday 19 January
10.00am to 12noon

Ref: C17/02

or

Thursday 19 January
6.00pm to 8.00pm

Ref: C17/03

Pupil Data

This course will cover:

- School performance – sources of information
- RAISEonline demystified
- Benchmark comparisons
- Identifying trends and patterns
- Questions for governors to ask
- What might Ofsted ask me?

Thursday 26 January
6.00pm to 8.00pm

Ref: C17/05

or

Friday 27 January
10.00am to 12noon

Ref: C17/06

Pupil Premium

This course will cover:

- The responsibilities of governors
- Ofsted expectations and requirements
- Questions for governors to ask
- How successful schools are using the Pupil Premium

Thursday 09 February
10.00am to 12noon
or

Ref: C17/07

Thursday 09 February
6.00pm to 8.00pm

Ref: C17/08

The Role of the School Governor - An induction course for new governors

This course is an important element of a governor's induction and it is recommended that all new governors attend. It covers the essential aspects of a governing board's responsibilities and provides an opportunity for participants to discuss how best to approach their role as a governor. The course is informal, non-threatening (you won't be put on the spot!) and provides a forum for you to ask questions about your new role.

The course is offered as two evening sessions on:

Wednesday 01 March
6.00pm to 8.00pm
and

Ref: C17/10

Wednesday 08 March
6.00pm to 8.00pm

Ref: C17/11

or

a one day session on:
Thursday 09 March
9.30am to 2.45pm

Ref: C17/12

Cost: (See next column)

Free with Governor Training Service Agreement 1; £100 plus vat per evening session if no service agreement; £200 excl vat for the one day session if no service agreement.

Safer Recruitment

The School Staffing Regulations require governing bodies of maintained schools to ensure that at least one person on any appointment panel has undertaken safer recruitment training. Participants on this course will be awarded a Certificate of Accreditation upon successful completion of a short assessment paper on the day.

Friday 17 February
9.00am to 4.00pm

Ref: C17/09

Cost: Free with Governor Training Service Agreement 1 or £200 excluding vat if no service agreement

Governing School Finances

This course will cover:

- An overview of the (SFVS) Schools Financial Value Standard
- The governing board and school staff
- Setting the budget
- Value for money
- Protecting public money

Monday 13 March
10.00am to 12noon
or

Ref: C17/13

Monday 13 March
6.00pm to 8.00pm

Ref: C17/14

Parent Governors

This informal course aims to clarify the role of the parent governor and will include:

- What does being a parent representative mean?
- What if I'm approached by another parent?
- Separating being a parent from being a parent governor
- The importance of confidentiality

Tuesday 21 March
6.00pm to 8.00pm

or

Wednesday 22 March
10.00am to 12noon

Ref: C17/15

Ref: C17/16

Online Safety

This course will cover:

- Potential risks posed by the internet and new technologies
- Is your school e-safe?
- Acceptable/Responsible Use Policies for children and staff
- Maintaining your professional reputation online
- Governing body responsibilities

Wednesday 29 March
10.00am to 12noon

or

Wednesday 29 March
6.00pm to 8.00pm

Ref: C17/17

Ref: C17/18

Booking information

For more information or to book a place on a course call Jean Worrall on 0151 233 3944 or email jean.worrall@si.liverpool.gov.uk.

You will receive written confirmation of your booking by email or post.

Our courses are available to all schools, whatever their status (maintained, academy, free, independent, UTC) and from any local authority.

Cost

Unless otherwise stated all sessions are FREE with Governor Training Service Agreement 1 or £100 excl vat per session if no Service Agreement. Longer sessions are priced individually. As a courtesy, please liaise with your school before booking onto a course if this will incur a fee. If you are unable to attend a course for which you have booked please tell us as soon as possible otherwise a fee, if applicable, will be charged.

Venue

The venue for all sessions is Toxteth Annexe Conference Centre, Aigburth Road, Liverpool, L17 7BN (please note that Aigburth Road is a dual carriageway). Free car parking is available within the grounds of the building. Bus routes 82 and 60 run regular services along Aigburth Road whilst St Michael's train station is located 600 metres away on Southbrook Road, L17 7BQ.

School Improvement Liverpool

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