

Governors' News

A Termly Newsletter for Liverpool Governors



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Liverpool Learning Partnership



The Liverpool Promise

Following a series of meetings and discussions, the Liverpool Challenge, originally instigated by the mayor, has been renamed Liverpool Promise and has been gathering momentum with support from Steve Munby and the Education Development Trust, and from Sir Tim Brighouse who has focussed his support on secondary schools. An action plan is now being drawn up - LLP has 'promised' to drive forward the city's Attendance Strategy; to lead on the Cultural Education Partnership; to ensure the action plan for mental health and emotional wellbeing meets the needs of learners in schools; to work with partners to ensure good CPD in schools and to coordinate work on transition across all phases.

Looked After Children

LLP has engaged Young Advisors who are consulting with 75 Looked After Children about their needs in accessing art and culture. We are also consulting professionals working with these children to learn from their experience and to share that good practice. A training session for arts organisations will then be offered in conjunction with the Liverpool Safeguarding Children Board. Five LAC young people will be given the opportunity to work with Anne Frank House in a filming project linked to the Liverpool Schools' Parliament.

Attendance

Attendance has been a major focus of the city facing work of LLP in this last year. There is recognition that attendance is everyone's business and a strategic group has been working on an action plan to address concerns. In March, the Mayor launched the city's Attendance Strategy from the business sector. The strategy includes an Attendance Charter for all organisations to sign up to, highlighting the need for a cohesive approach to tackling this city wide issue. Clear strides have been made with some key partners to drive forward this agenda. For example, strategic meetings with health colleagues have resulted in open communications with GPs and schools, named contacts for schools in all GP surgeries, an acknowledgement that 'sick notes' should not be issued for school aged pupils, etc. A wider, city facing media campaign is now being finalised to reinforce the message of the strategy.



Alongside this partnership working, LLP has worked with colleagues in SIL on a Quality Mark for attendance which was piloted in the summer term. Once evaluated, this can be rolled out to other schools. In November 2016, LLP hosted a celebration event in the Town Hall for pupils who had 100% attendance for the whole school phase. The individuals were presented with medals, a certificate and a Kindle for their achievement. One pupil had attended every day from Reception to the end of year 11. He received an iPad in recognition of this great achievement. This will become an annual event and this year will include awards for the most improved attendance. LLP is grateful to the Families Programme for funding work on the attendance action plan and awards.

Culture Hub

The Liverpool Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP) is proving invaluable in bridging education and the Arts with co-ordinator, Alice Demba, working with a range of partners to deliver the LCEP strategic plan. A regular newsletter has been established, highlighting what is on offer to pupils and schools from a wide range of cultural partners. Approximately half of Liverpool schools have identified a Cultural Champion which is useful for the sharing of information (has your school?). 44 schools are currently involved in Artsmark, with 21 having claimed £500 of funding from LLP to support them in working with a cultural partner.

Five secondary schools have been working on Cultural Citizens with Curious Minds, engaging children from disadvantaged backgrounds in designing and participating in arts and cultural activities. This was warmly received by the schools and the young people involved culminating in a celebration event at FACT in July. LCEP is also funding 10 schools currently partnering with arts organisations to enhance their creative curriculum and producing lesson plans and activities which can be shared across all schools. This work is supported by a successful bid to the Arts Council with more schools able to take part during this financial year. Consideration is being given to the best way to capture the arts/cultural experience a young person has throughout their schooling. An informative brochure has recently been produced by Liverpool John Moores University detailing careers in the creative industries.

Secure funding

Currently, there is only one school in the city that has chosen not to be a member of LLP. The term 'Liverpool Family of Schools' has become a strapline for LLP and is one which sums up our approach to care for all learners across all phases. In 2015, schools made a three year commitment to their membership of LLP. Subscriptions to LLP will remain at £3 per learner per year. Last year, LLP actually spent £8.74 per learner having accessed additional funding from various sources including Curious Minds, LCVS, the Arts Council and the Families Programme.

LLP has also negotiated with other organisations to reduce their costs to schools. For example, a current Storybarn offer is available at discounted rates of up to 50% for LLP schools. Discussions have begun to address transport costs to venues which hinder school visits. Work with LCVS and businesses has enabled Reading Oases to be introduced in some schools at no cost. LLP is fully funding reading clubs for vulnerable pupils as a pilot, to be rolled out city wide during the autumn. LLP is also underwriting the cost for Mental Health First Aiders to be trained in all secondary schools, with a primary model to follow in the next academic year. Further funding opportunities exist now that charitable status has been granted. For example, the work with Anne Frank House is as a result of a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The Right People Around the Table



Getting the right people around the table should not begin when your governing board finds itself with a vacancy. It's a cycle that begins with evaluating what you've already got and then making a decision about who you need now and in the future.

Evaluating: skills, composition and current practice

The chair (as leader of the governing board) with the support of the clerk (as constitutional and procedural advisor) is responsible for the capability of the governing board as a whole. This involves evaluating: the range of knowledge and skills on the board, the structures, current practice and whether everyone is being used in the best way. It also means recognising any training needs and whether new governors are needed now or as part of a succession plan for the future.

If you are governing at academy level within a multi academy trust then this exercise may need to be done as part of a trust-wide exercise.

a) Evaluation: Looking at Current Skills

In January 2017 the Department for Education published a new competency framework for governance. This document categorises the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed for effective governance in schools, academies and multi academy trusts.

Many governing boards undertake a skills audit on a regular basis. By using the competency framework, a skills audit and some analysis, you'll get a good picture of the skills your governing board has as well as the skills it is lacking. Then you can identify any gaps that need to be filled.

b) Evaluation: The Board's Composition

Part of the evaluation process is considering whether the composition of the board is still fit for purpose.

A quarter of governing boards are comprised of 10 members or fewer. Most school governing boards have between 11-15 members. If your board is larger than 15 members you should consider whether the board might run better with fewer. If some members of the board do not attend often or do not participate actively when they do, think about whether their place on the board is surplus to requirements, that is, if you are functioning without them. Likewise, if you have a number of 'vacancies' on paper but are actually running efficiently without filling them, you should consider formalising a reduction in size.

The questions to ask as part of the evaluation of the composition are:

- Is the board the right size? Not too big or too small?
- Do you have good debates covering the relevant issues and angles, but not so many voices that the discussion gets unwieldy or regularly inconclusive?
- Do you have enough people to carry out the board's duties?
- Do you have the right committee structure and are the same people on every committee?
- How does the composition of the board, as set out on paper, reflect the way we really work as a group?

c) Evaluation: Current Practice

When recruiting new governors it's a good opportunity for the board to think about its current governance practice. How effective is it? What do existing governors think about the way the board works? What are its strengths and weaknesses? What opportunities and threats are on the horizon? This is known as a SWOT analysis. It will also help the board to identify the sort of help it may need in addition to new board members.

d) Evaluation: Who Do We Need: Skills, Experience and Knowledge

All governors should have relevant skills and experiences to contribute to the work of the governing board, which collectively needs to have a range of backgrounds and competences appropriate to its responsibilities. Many governors will have more than one of these skills. On the other hand, if there is a shortage in one area across the whole team this may need to be rectified either by training or by recruiting someone to the board with the necessary skills, or both.

e) Evaluation: Balance and Diversity

Governing boards in England do not tend to reflect the ethnicity and diversity of the population at large. Is your board as diverse as it should be in terms of age, ethnicity, gender and social background?

Diverse and inclusive boards can bring fresh perspectives to the way a school is governed. They can access a wider pool of talent and skill, set an example about inclusion 'from the top down' and demonstrate a commitment to their own diversity policy. It also brings knowledge and sometimes a different perspective that can ensure the board does not succumb to 'group think'.

Tips to get more participation from under-represented groups

1. Use appropriate language and imagery on adverts. For example, a stock photograph of an all-white, male group might send the wrong message when trying to attract those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.
2. Remember, people want experiences that are interesting, challenging, worthwhile, relevant to the rest of their lives and concerns, and make a difference to others.
3. Highlight the skills that young professionals can contribute but also gain.
4. Emphasise that all out of pocket expenses will be reimbursed.
5. Try recruiting through specialist centres and contacting organisations run by (or for) people with disabilities. For example, special schools, local university disabled students' coordinators or committees.
6. Work with established community groups and volunteer networks such as Volunteering England.

It's important for governors to understand that they are not on the board to represent anyone or a particular group but to use their own judgement to act in the best interests of the pupils at the school.

f) Evaluation: Exit Interviews

Exit interviews are a good chance for the governor who is leaving to reflect on the work of the board and to enable the transfer of knowledge and experience from the departing governor to the rest of the board. Below are some example questions.

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- (If leaving before end of office) what caused you to think about stepping down?
- Did you have clear goals and know what was expected of you as a governor?
- How did the role match your initial expectations?
- What improvement could be made to the way that you were inducted?
- Did you always feel welcome and encouraged to share your thoughts, concerns and questions with me or anyone on the board?
- What could you say about communication to and between governors, and how these could be improved?
- Did you clearly understand and feel a part of the accomplishment of the schools vision and goals?
- Do you feel that you had the support necessary to be a governor? If not, what was missing?

Recruiting: Attracting Good Candidates

Once you have evaluated the skills on your governing board you'll have a good idea of the 'gap' in knowledge, skills or experience that you need to plug.

a) How do we find good candidates: national volunteer banks

There are national charities working to place volunteers in schools as governors and trustees. Inspiring Governance is a new service that connects skilled volunteers interested in serving as governors with schools that need them:

www.inspiringgovernance.org.

Academy Ambassadors is a non-profit organisation that recruits high-calibre business people and leading employers as trustees to multi-academy trusts:

www.academyambassadors.org.

b) How do we find good candidates: parent and staff governor elections

When you invite nominations be clear about the skills needed by the governing board as identified by your skills audit. Highlight the time commitment, training requirements, role and responsibilities and code of conduct. It is a good idea to arrange a meeting with interested candidates to explain the role in more detail.

Inducting: Training and Support

It is essential that governing boards are committed to inducting new governors. New recruits should be in no doubt about what their powers and responsibilities are and how to carry them out. New governors should be made aware of training opportunities available to them. Many boards allocate an experienced member as a mentor for new governors. This can be extremely beneficial to new recruits and provides an opportunity for them to ask questions. Be deliberate about who is chosen to be a mentor and make sure they know what is expected of them. Mentors set an example for how board members should behave. They should be able to ask good questions, have the time to listen and meet with their mentees, provide motivation and encourage reflection. The clerk to the governing board is also an invaluable source of help and support and their responsibilities should be made clear so that new governors and trustees feel comfortable asking them for information and advice.

Tips for Retaining Governors and Trustees

1. Take the governance of your school (or group of schools) seriously. Seriously enough to have a role description, person specification and code of conduct to demonstrate who you're looking for and what's expected of them.
2. Look at your track record. Do new governors come for the first meeting or two and then quietly disappear? This could be an induction issue. Make sure each new governor is mentored by a more experienced board member and has enrolled onto induction training.
3. Look at the commitment required. Are meetings sensibly timed with board papers circulated in advance? Are there briefing notes on topical matters written for the governor audience? Are visits to the school appropriate with a strategic purpose?
4. For chairs especially, respect and cultivate the knowledge and experience that people bring to the role. Give newer members the opportunity to speak. Reassure them that what may feel like a 'stupid question' is usually an intelligently naïve one, illuminating issues that others may assume are well understood. Encourage them to ask about unfamiliar jargon and never dismiss someone's view because education is somehow 'different'.

Taken from The Right People Around the Table published by Inspiring Governance, March 2017

Co-chairing



Many governing boards have found it difficult to encourage governors to stand for the role of chair despite having governors that have the requisite skills. Often the time commitment or a governor's lack of experience can put them off from putting themselves forward. The option of co-chairing could offer a suitable, practical and effective solution.

What is Co-chairing?

Co-chairing involves two governors sharing the role of chair and carrying out the duties and responsibilities of chair jointly. Statutory guidance for maintained schools states that:

"It is possible to appoint more than one person to share the role of chair or similarly the role of vice chair, if the board believes this is necessary and in the best interests of the school. The board would need to ensure that any role-sharing arrangement does not lead to a loss of clarity in its leadership."

Although an exact number of governors is not specified, it is expected that no more than two governors would share the role of chair. Both co-chairs must be able to commit the time required and possess the skills necessary to be an effective chair.

The two obvious circumstances for appointing co-chairs would be:

- Where there are individuals on the governing body with the requisite skills but without the time to devote to being the sole chair
- Where there is an experienced person wishing to step down and a relatively inexperienced person wishing to step up – and the co-chair role offers a short-term solution for succession planning purposes.

A co-chair arrangement allows governors to share the workload, reducing the time they need to spend on the role and drawing upon the skills and experience of two governors. For more information, look at the Benefits of Co-chairing section below.

Co-chairing in practice

In order for co-chairing to work, there needs to be a clear understanding on what is required from both co-chairs from the very beginning. Both co-chairs must trust each other's judgement as they will be required to accept and stand by the decisions made by the other. This is also true for the other members of the governing board – while there may be two people carrying out the role, a decision once made is the decision of the chair, whichever of the two made it. It is important that a co-chair arrangement does not lead to a loss of clarity or leadership; in particular having two people in the role must not lead to playing one off against the other i.e. if you don't like the answer the first one gave you it is not an option to seek an alternative view.

It is vital that the details of how this arrangement would work in practice is set out at an early stage and communicated to all governors and the headteacher. For example, chair attendance at meetings with the headteacher could be alternated with both co-chairs attending together once a term.

However, if the chairs wish to, the duties can be divided between them with each taking the lead on certain areas and then feeding back to the other. On the rare occasion that the need for the chair's action arises, efforts should be made for both chairs to be contacted and for them to discuss the matter between them and a joint decision made. This may not always be possible and so arrangements need to be in place to ensure decisions can be taken effectively by one of the two co-chairs.

Whether the decision is made jointly or by one of the co-chairs it classes as a decision of the chair and ultimately the governing board – it is not an option for the other chair to publicly disagree or challenge the decision. This is where trust is at the forefront. On a practical basis this may mean some form of rota, particularly so that the headteacher and clerk to governors know which co-chair is the first point of contact that week.

Short term or long term

A role share arrangement in this context should not just be seen as a short-term solution; there is no reason why a job sharing arrangement cannot work in the long-term although it should be regularly reviewed to see if it remains suitable for the governing board. An initial review could take place around six months into the arrangement to see whether the governing board is satisfied that there has been no loss in leadership. A co-chair arrangement may be viewed as a short term arrangement if adopted as part of an identified succession plan.

The co-chairs should also evaluate the arrangement together to ensure it remains suitable for them. A more in-depth analysis of the arrangement can then be undertaken after 12 months in order to determine whether this is something that remains effective and appropriate for the governing board.

The role of vice-chair

The vice chair would still be responsible for acting as chair in circumstances where the chair is unavailable although in the first instance if one of the co-chairs are unavailable the other co-chair would assume sole responsibility. Both the regulations for LA maintained schools and the model articles of association for academies require governing boards to elect a vice-chair and so this position must still be filled.

Elections for co-chairs

The procedure for electing co-chairs would be the same procedure set out in the regulations and articles used by the governing board to elect a chair. The two governors who hope to stand as co-chairs would stand together as a joint candidate i.e. the vote will be for the two together not as individuals. The election process should also not exclude any governor that wishes to stand for election by themselves.

If one of the chairs were to resign mid-term a new election should be held. The governing board would have voted for the two individuals concerned together as a 'joint package' and they may not have necessarily supported the governors separately.

Meetings

For practical reasons, only one of the co-chairs should chair governing board meetings and so the co-chairs could do this on a rotational basis. In the event of a tie vote, the chair who is chairing the meeting would have the deciding vote. However, when compiling the agenda both chairs should be consulted.

Benefits of co-chairing

Co-chairing will enable workload to be shared and could encourage governors to stand who may have otherwise been reluctant to do so because of the additional time commitment. A co-chairing arrangement will allow for the duties of chair to be divided between two governors.

Two governors sharing the role can enable the co-chairs to discuss matters and bring with them additional viewpoints which is not always possible if the role is carried out by one governor. It also presents an opportunity to put to use a variety of skills and experience for them to apply to the role.

The role of chair can at times feel isolating and so it can therefore be helpful to be able to have someone to discuss and share issues with.

Co-chairing can also help with succession planning. A governing board may have a situation whereby a governor is willing to stand for chair but either they or the governing board feel they would benefit from help and guidance from a more experienced governor offering insight, encouragement and guidance.

It may be that the arrangement is used as a short-term measure when an existing experienced chair has indicated his/her intention to step down and a new potential chair will co-chair with the existing chair for a period of time to decide whether they will be able to do the role full time. Co-chairing could therefore be used as a way to aid the smooth transition from governor to chair, enabling the less experienced chair to gain first-hand experience of chairing without taking on the whole responsibility at once.

Potential drawbacks of a co-chair arrangement

Although a co-chairing arrangement may be suitable for some governing boards there are potential issues that must be considered. As both chairs will be bound by the decisions made by the other irrespective of whether they agree, a governor should only co-chair with another governor whose decisions they are likely to agree with. As with any job share it is important that the work is divided fairly. Although the role is shared and so individual chairs can undertake certain aspects of the role, both chairs retain shared responsibility and so should also retain general oversight.

Ground rules for co-chairing

To help ensure that a co-chair arrangement works the governing board should ensure that they set 'ground rules'. Below are some examples:

- Both chairs must trust each other's judgement- there may be times where one chair will need to make a decision on behalf of the other co-chair. In these situations it is vital that any decision made by one chair is supported by both.
- It should be made clear to the governing board and the headteacher that when a decision needs to be made by the chair, attempts should be made to contact both co-chairs.
- There should be a clear system in place to determine how meetings are chaired, this could be a rotational basis.
- The governing board need to be satisfied that this arrangement is best for the school and there is no loss of clarity in its leadership.
- It is important that both chairs communicate with each other to ensure that no information is lost and so they should stay in regular contact with each other.
- If duties are split between the chairs, each chair should ensure they maintain general oversight of all duties as both chairs will remain responsible for anything that falls under 'chair's responsibility'.
- Parents, staff and other stakeholders should also be aware of the arrangement and know that although the role is carried out by two people, both individuals have the authority to carry out the roles and responsibilities of chair.
- It should be made clear that the role still remains one role and so although the co-chairs may disagree they must always reach a final decision.

Governors, do the Honours



Martin Matthews advocates more governors being nominated for honours.

No one becomes a governor for the free biscuits, sherry and camaraderie of singing Kum Ba Yah around a cheery campfire made from old national curriculum files. Those days are long gone. No one becomes a governor thinking of glory, adulation, pay and expenses in recognition of volunteering their time. In many respects governance exemplifies the number one Nolan principle – selflessness. Research by the University of Bath in 2008 concluded that governance was overlooked, that hasn't changed either. Governors accept that we do what we do for the benefit of the children, staff and community where we live. That's what motivates us. We do our level best to provide the very best education for all children.

Governance has continued to accrue responsibilities and evolve since the early 1990s due to "local management of schools". This incremental change has picked up pace during the last few years. Increased school autonomy and Academisation places more responsibility and accountability on the governing board of trustees. With the average primary school budget at over a million pounds, and a small multi academy trust easily in excess of £10m, the real responsibility and impact of governance continues to grow year on year.

The move to a more professional volunteer governor cadre has increased governance accountability expectations. The time volunteered and the level of subject knowledge cannot be described as amateur.

In the same time frame recognition for governors has diminished considerably. The removal of the governance category in the National Teaching Awards is just one example. The NGA Outstanding Governance Awards recognise whole governing bodies (and individual clerks) but individual governors can sometimes get lost in the noise, when their individual contribution may have been significant in improving and transforming an entire board – and therefore the outcomes for a school's entire community.

Ground rules for co-chairing

My convoluted introduction leads me to what I really want to talk about. Twice a year (that I'll admit to) I drive my family nuts. I sit staring at my laptop muttering to myself and trying to engage them in conversation. Being quite used to this they humour me and leave me to it. I make the same mistake every time. I read through the honours lists.

I know so many fantastic dedicated governors who deserve recognition and I hope that someone I know or someone who knows a friend of a friend is on the list. Occasionally I am delighted when a name I do know pops up. Usually the muttering continues. I feel very strongly that people who are well paid for doing a good job deserve their pay, but recognition? Governors are the nation's largest volunteer group and grossly under-recognised.

Governors are well known for sorting things out ourselves. As a resourceful and inventive bunch we roll our sleeves up and get on with finding an answer. That's what we do. I've met many talented and dedicated governors through Twitter and Facebook. When I floated the problem the discussion turned to finding a resolution. Our group knew the best way forward was for us to support others.

To give our discussion some facts to work on I analysed the number of governors and head teachers for the last ten years who had received recognition. The results were startling.

For every governor who was recognised ten head teachers were. Not only that but the level of recognition for head teachers was simply unobtainable for governors. Given that there are at least ten governors for each head teacher that means governors are 1% as likely as head teachers to receive recognition. Like almost every other governance situation I thought if we were going to resolve this we would have to do it ourselves. We started a group to generate more nominations and higher quality nominations for governors, from governors.

I asked advice from the National Governors Association and several governor friends to write a guide. Retired teachers still like correcting others spelling and grammar. I gleaned as much information as I could from other sources and collectively we wrote a "how to" guide to support governor nomination. Since then I use every opportunity to suggest that governors are nominated.

Sir Daniel Moynihan (Chair of the Education Honours Committee) is encouraging more schools to nominate their unsung heroes for awards: “We’re looking for people who have made a sustained and significant contribution, or done something innovative and gone beyond their job. There are loads of people in our schools who do that stuff. We need to find out about them.”

I know the biggest barrier to nomination is people think the process is complicated. It isn't and we can help you.

Quick check

This quick checklist should give you a basic idea of how strong a nomination could be....

- Has the person demonstrated outstanding governance in their school?
- Has the person demonstrated the impact of governance beyond their own school?
- Does the person do other voluntary activities for their community?
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If you answered yes to all three there could be the potential to nominate that person. Nominations can be submitted at any time of year. Awards are announced at New Year (end of December) and for the Queen's Birthday (mid-June). It usually takes 12 to 18 months to process a nomination because of the background work undertaken by Department for Education officials.

Ideally nominations should be made while the nominee is still in service and at least 12 months before they retire or step down. A nomination made post-retirement is very likely to be unsuccessful. This may seem particularly unfair to chairs of governors who may “retire” at any time. Don't delay making a nomination. Any nomination solely based on length of service is unlikely to succeed.

Rant over – except to say...

I look forward to hearing from you if you need support – and good luck in nominating a brilliant governor.

Martin Matthews is a National Leader of Governance, a chair of governors and has been a governor on several governing bodies across Greater Manchester as well as a Manchester Challenge governor champion. He tweets at [@mm684](https://twitter.com/mm684).

Governors do the honours – how to nominate a governor for recognition' can be downloaded from [here](#)

Flexible Working in Schools

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An increasing number of teachers want to be able to work flexibly and the majority of those are women returning from a maternity leave or a career break. This reflects a growing trend nationally across all professions, where a recent survey found that 58% of women returning to work after a career break of a year or more wanted to return to part-time work. However, while the percentage of teachers working part-time has stayed steady in recent years (at around 22%), it is still significantly lower than in the general population. Around 8.6% of male teachers work part-time, compared to 13% of men in the workforce nationally, and the difference is even greater for women: 26.4% of female teachers work part-time, compared to 42% of women in the workforce nationally. This is not just a problem for equality in the teaching workforce, it is also a factor in attracting and keeping high quality teachers.

There is a range of ways that teachers can consider working flexibly.

- Part time working - the most common form of flexible working across all professions, including teaching. Usually characterised by working less than fulltime hours and/or working fewer days;
- Job sharing - two or more people do one job and split the hours. Increasingly popular option for teachers and schools, particularly where individual teachers are able to organise and propose their own job-sharing arrangements;
- Compressed hours - working full-time hours but over fewer days. A useful option when it may not be financially convenient for a teacher to take on a reduced number of hours. However, can have increased workload implications for the reduced number of days that an individual teacher does work;
- Staggered hours - The employee has different start, finish and break times from other workers (this would be dependent on each individual application and situation). Useful for teachers with caring/childcare responsibilities who may need to drop off or collect children but who don't want or need to work less than five days a week.

Flexible working improves employees' work-life balance and well-being, helps to attract and retain staff, particularly those with caring responsibilities, increases productivity and reduces costs. Alongside job sharing it forms a key element in many employers' overall talent strategy.

Research from the Institute of Leadership and Management has shown that offering people the choice to work flexibly can improve performance. Their report, *Flexible Working: Goodbye Nine to Five*, shows that 82% of managers think that flexible working benefits their business.

A CIPD report on 'Flexible working provision and uptake' in 2012 found that 72% of the employers surveyed believed that implementing flexible working practices had a positive impact on staff engagement and 73% felt that it had a positive impact on employee motivation.

Many schools also report considerable benefits for staff, school and pupils as a result of job sharing and flexible working. For example:

- A more diverse range of skills and experience can be achieved, as well as equality of opportunity (such as reasonable adjustments for disabled staff);
- In small schools, particularly, a greater number of teaching staff makes covering the curriculum more practicable;
- Ill health absence may be reduced;
- Experienced staff return to work after maternity leave more quickly since full-time working can be difficult to balance with caring commitments;
- Effective job share arrangements can give pupils the opportunity to learn from two experienced teachers;
- Such arrangements are an alternative to early retirement for those in their final years of service, allowing a reduction in working time before retirement rather than the 'cliff edge' approach to retirement. Skilled and experienced members of staff who would otherwise leave the profession may be retained by adopting these working arrangements;
- Many schools are using such arrangements to aid succession planning or as continuing professional development.

Eligibility & the legal position

All employees have the legal right to request flexible working. Employees can apply for flexible working if they've worked continuously for the same employer for the last 26 weeks. Employers must deal with requests in a 'reasonable manner'. They should assess the advantages and disadvantages of the application; hold a meeting to discuss the request with the employee, then offer an appeal process if the application is rejected.

An employer can only refuse an application if they have a good business reason for doing so – which involves weighing up the benefits for the employee and the school/ college against any potential adverse business impact. Reasonable grounds for rejecting a request would be:

- the burden of additional costs;
- an inability to organise work amongst existing staff;
- a planned structural change to the business;
- a detrimental effect on performance, quality, or on the ability to meet customer demand;
- insufficient work for the periods the employee proposes to work;
- an inability to recruit additional staff.

Part-time workers are protected from being treated less favourably than equivalent full-time workers just because they're part time. It is important to note that all posts, whether on full time or part time contracts, should be manageable and sustainable for the individual.

Communications & Meetings

Really effective communications as well as having clear expectations over things such as attendance at meetings and parent evenings is central to any flexible working arrangement and needs to be written into any agreement. It is also important that not only the individual teacher and their line manager fully understand the parameters of the flexible working but also any colleagues who work closely with them. In any working environment, unscheduled conversations are often as important a source of important information as formal meetings. It is the joint responsibility of the individual teacher and the school to ensure as far as possible teachers working flexibly receive the same level of information to do their job as any other teacher. This might mean arranging telephone catch-up meetings or agreeing that a teacher who attends a meeting in school on a day or at a time where they would normally be away from the school can be given that time in lieu on another day.

In jobshare arrangements, having a very clear understanding of who is doing what and when is a fundamental aspect of making the arrangement work. Many job-share teachers try to ensure that they have some time together each week to discuss any issues that have arisen and any hand-over information. Schools and individuals should exercise care not to become too reliant on electronic communications – a quick face to face chat or a phone call is often far more effective than endless emails or texts, which can often be missed, misinterpreted or clog up inboxes.

Line managers should also consider having regular catch-up chats with members of their team who are working flexibly. These can be outside of the formal performance management process and should be used to ensure that the arrangements are still working well both the teacher and the school and to ensure that all relevant information is shared.

Job Share Headship/leadership group

The Education Act 2002 requires a school (maintained schools, ie community, VC, community special, maintained nursery, foundation, VA, foundation special) to have a head teacher at all times. Provided that the headship is not left vacant for part of the week, this requirement can be met by two part-time contracts brought together to create a job share arrangement.

There is no such legal requirement to have a deputy/assistant head employed at all times. Therefore, it is possible to be a deputy/assistant head on a part-time basis, ie the vacancy created by the variation of contract to part-time does not need to be filled. However, deputy and assistant heads should bear in mind workload issues if they retain the full responsibilities of their post and a teaching commitment.

Discussion with the head teacher about a reduction in teaching or other responsibilities should take place to avoid the situation where the deputy/assistant head is working fewer hours, and consequently being paid less, but retains the workload of a full-time member of staff.

It is clear that there are, and have been for some time, a variety of job share models within the leadership group and there are many leadership job shares in both the primary and secondary sectors, and of male and female sharers. Where recruitment is particularly difficult, recently retired heads have shared the headship, sometimes with an inexperienced leadership group member, or sometimes with another recently retired head. Where the head is close to retirement, job share working permits a more gradual departure and a good staff development opportunity. Similarly, such arrangements for deputy/assistant heads have supported staff development and assisted with work-life balance.

Whatever the precise arrangements, it is vital that the arrangement is supported by the governing body or governing board and, preferably (in LA maintained schools) by the LA. Any job share must be promoted and explained to the staff of the school and to the parent body, so that the arrangement is understood and any concerns are allayed. The partners will need to ensure that excellent communication is maintained, both with each other, staff and the governing body. Arrangements for attendance at staff, governing body and parents meetings will also need to be clarified. Well-structured management systems will be essential. Job share partners will also need to clarify their own roles and responsibilities to minimise confusion.

Job sharing in the leadership group can work extremely well, as OFSTED reports have shown and it is good practice to build in a periodic review so that a designated governor or governors may evaluate the arrangement with the partners. In any event, the normal appraisal arrangements will apply.

Taken from Flexible Working in Schools available from www.gov.uk

Anti-Bullying Week

13–17 November



Coordinated by the Anti-Bullying Alliance, Anti-Bullying Week takes place this year from 13-17 November shining a spotlight on bullying and encouraging all children, teachers and parents to take action against bullying throughout the year.

This year's theme 'All Different, All Equal' aims to:

- empower children and young people to celebrate what makes them, and others, unique
- help children and young people understand how important it is that every child feels valued and included in school, able to be themselves, without fear of bullying
- encourage parents and carers to work with their school and talk to their children about bullying, difference and equality
- enable teachers, school support staff and youth workers to celebrate what makes us 'all different, all equal' – by celebrating difference and equality and taking individual and collective action to prevent bullying, creating safe environments where children can be themselves.

The theme is based on the views of almost 600 children and young people who completed an Anti-Bullying Alliance survey, as well as consultation with ABA's many members. The young people surveyed said they wanted to highlight tackling bullying as a result of perceived difference.

The Anti-Bullying Alliance will be supporting schools with a range of free activities to help them take action to prevent bullying and create safe environments for their pupils with their pupils. The project will also include a film competition for young people.

How can schools get involved in Anti-Bullying Week 2017?

- Children and young people can nominate teachers and school staff in England that go above and beyond the call of duty to provide pastoral care to students for issues such as bullying, relationships, family life, mental health and wellbeing. All nominated teachers and school staff will receive a Power for Good certificate. A panel of children and young people from Young NCB will choose one nomination from Primary and one nomination from Secondary to win our award.
- Access free Anti-Bullying Week lesson and assemblies ideas and other useful resources available from September
- Share your Anti-Bullying Week plans and activities online (@ABAonline) using **#AntiBullyingWeek #AllDifferentAllEqual**

The Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA) is a unique coalition of organisations and individuals who work together to reduce bullying and create safer environments in which children and young people can live, grow, play and learn. ABA is hosted by the National Children's Bureau. For more information visit www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk

The National Children's Bureau is a leading charity that for 50 years has been improving the lives of children and young people, especially the most vulnerable. NCB works with children and for children, to influence government policy, be a strong voice for young people and practitioners, and provide creative solutions on a range of social issues. For more information visit: www.ncb.org.uk.

Setting Term Dates

The proposed 195 school days for 2017/18 days are set out below with five training days for schools to allocate.

Last year several schools did not stick to the proposed dates. This meant that some infant and junior departments of the same school and some secondary schools had holidays which were not in line with each other.

There was one half term which dragged over two weeks because some schools chose one week and other schools took the following week. This had the knock-on effect of parents taking their children off school in term time so that the whole family could be on holiday together.

If all governors could ask at board meetings that school term dates should stick to the same dates as agreed by Liverpool, this would help families and also the city's attendance numbers.

Autumn Term 2017

Starts:

Monday 4th September

Half term:

Monday 23rd to

Friday 27th October

Ends:

Thursday 21st December

Spring Term 2018

Starts:

Monday 8th January

Half term:

Monday 12th to

Friday 16th February

Ends:

Friday 23rd March

Summer Term 2018

Starts:

Monday 9th April

May Day:

Monday 7th May

Half Term:

Monday 28th May to

Friday 1st June

Ends:

Tuesday 24th July

Dates for Governors' Diaries



Tues 12 Sep
Starting 10:00

Mossfits Lane
Primary School,
21 Moss
Pits Lane,
Liverpool
L15 6UN

First committee meeting of the 2017/18 academic year

Guest speaker: Alice Demba, Liverpool Cultural Education Co-ordinator, who will provide an update on the city cultural project. We welcome governors to our committee meetings.

To book a place please email David Blythe, Honorary Secretary at: admin@livgovforum.org.uk

Sat 14 Oct
09:30 – 12:30

Partnership
for Learning
Centre, South
Road, Speke,
Liverpool,
L24 9PZ

LGF Conference

Topic: Attachment Friendly Principles

Speaker: Rohit Naik, Headteacher

Maxine O'Neill, Deputy Headteacher, Hope School

Topic: Refusing to touch pupils' is abuse

Speaker: Professor Francis McGlone,

Liverpool John Moores University

Tues 14 Nov
starting 18:30

Peoples'
Lounge,
Goodison
Park, Everton
Football Club,
Liverpool,
L4 4EL

LGF AGM

Guest speaker: Jenny Holder, LLP Reading Coordinator who will provide an update on the LLP reading project

Further details of both the Conference and AGM will sent out in due course. In the meanwhile, we trust you will make a note of the dates in your diary.

Courses for Autumn Term



Tues 19 Sept
6pm to 8pm

Ref: G17/38

Cost: Free

Termly Meeting for Chairs

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

There will be a presentation of the Director's Items for the term followed by opportunities for discussion and questions.

Thurs 21 Sept
10am to 12pm

Ref: G17/39

Cost: Free

Termly Meeting 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.

Presenter: Terry Brown, School Governance Services

Thurs 05 Oct
10am to 12pm

Ref: G17/40

or

6pm-8pm

Ref: G17/41

Ofsted Inspections

This course will cover:

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

Presenter: Dave Cadwallader, School Governance Lead

Thurs 12 Oct
10am to 12pm

Ref: G17/42

or

6pm to 8pm

Ref: G17/43

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

Presenters: Terry Brown and Dave Cadwallader, School Governor Services

Mon 16 Oct
6pm to 8pm

Ref: G17/44

or

Wed 18 Oct

10am to 12pm

Ref: G17/45

Representing Your Governing Board at a Hearing

Hopefully, you will never have to use the information you will learn on this course! However, over time, most governing boards will encounter a grievance, disciplinary or other hearing. This course will cover:

- What happens before a hearing
- What to expect at a hearing
- Roles and responsibilities of all parties
- What happens after a hearing

Presenter: Liz Dodd, Senior HR Adviser, School Employment Advisory Team

Mon 30 Oct
6pm to 8pm

Ref: G17/46

or

Fri 03 Nov

10am to 12pm

Ref: G17/47

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

Presenter: John Byrne, Schools Finance Manager

The course is held over two sessions:

Part 1:

**Mon 06 Nov
6pm to 8pm**

Ref: G17/48

or

**Tue 07 Nov
10am to 12pm**

Ref: G17/49

Part 2:

**Mon 13 Nov
6pm to 8pm**

Ref: G17/50

or

**Tue 14 Nov
10am to 12pm**

Ref: G17/51

The Role of the School Governor

An induction course for new governors
(or a refresher course for experienced 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.

This course will cover:

- The core functions of governing bodies
- The legal framework for meetings
- What is strategic? What is operational?
- How governing bodies 'challenge' school leaders and hold them to account
- Monitoring and evaluating progress
- Complaints against the school

Presenter: Dave Cadwallader, School Governance Leads.

**Tues 28 Nov
10am to 12pm**

Ref: G17/53

or

6pm to 8pm

Ref: G17/54

Understanding Pupil Data

This course will cover:

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

Presenter: Maggi Huyton, School Improvement Partner

Mon 20 Nov
9am to 4pm
Ref: G17/52

Cost: Free with Governor Training Service Agreement 1 or £200 + vat 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.

This course will:

- Provide an understanding and awareness of offender behaviour
- Identify key features of staff recruitment that help deter or prevent the appointment of unsuitable people
- Consider policies and practices that minimise opportunities for abuse or ensure its prompt reporting
- Help participants begin to review recruitment policies and practices with a view to making them safer

Presenter: Phil Cooper, Senior School Improvement Officer, Safeguarding and SEN

Mon 04 Dec
6pm to 8pm
Ref: G17/55

or

Tues 05 Dec
10am to 12pm
Ref: G17/56

Academies for Beginners

This course is aimed at governors of maintained schools looking to develop their knowledge of governance in an Academy setting.

This course will cover:

- Routes to becoming an Academy
- The role of the Regional Schools Commissioner
- Members / Directors / Trustees – who does what?
- Models of Governance in a Multi Academy Trust
- Models of Leadership in a Multi Academy Trust

Presenter: Dave Cadwallader, School Governance Lead

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 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 on 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

0151 233 3901 | sil@si.liverpool.gov.uk | www.ednet.co

Toxteth Annexe, Aigburth Road, Liverpool, L17 7BN

