

Strong Governance. Strong Schools

The National Governors' Association is a national membership charity for governing boards of local authority maintained schools and academies across England. We aim to support governors and trustees in their vital role of leading school improvement, and taking your views to the government to lobby for changes. This is a small example of the work we produce for our members. If you are interested in finding out more, please call the office, or email our [membership team: membership@nga.org.uk](mailto:membership@nga.org.uk).

Welcome to this first edition of the new NGA termly bulletin which replaces the monthly bulletin board. The focus of this bulletin is improving good practice in school governance in England. It will be sent directly to all NGA corporate and local association members, and can be forwarded to anyone else.

If you're a new governor, check out our guide *Welcome to Governance!*

GOLD members get a free copy for every new governor when they register:

www.nga.org.uk/Publications/Welcome-to-Governance.aspx



Awards for Outstanding Governance – nominations open!

Nominations are now open for the 2015 Awards for Outstanding



Governance! The NGA awards are held every two years to celebrate the excellent practice of governing boards and clerks across England. The awards are open to any state-funded school in England, so please get nominating before 1 December! To enter, you just need to download a nomination form from the [NGA website \(www.nga.org.uk/About-Us/NGA-Awards.aspx\)](http://www.nga.org.uk/About-Us/NGA-Awards.aspx), fill it in, and send it back to awards@nga.org.uk.

Outstanding Governing Board

We are looking for boards that don't just demonstrate the three core functions of a governing board (ensuring vision, ethos, and strategy; holding the headteacher to account; and ensuring financial probity), but can show they have made a difference. Your school doesn't need to be rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted, but you need to have shown strong leadership as well as improvements in the pupils' education.

Outstanding Clerk

A good clerk is such a vital asset to a governing board. They should be a wealth of information and knowledge and be confident in advising



the governing board on legal matters. As part of our Clerking Matters campaign, we want to raise the status and professionalism of clerks so that more governing boards understand the difference it can make. Help us showcase some excellent examples by nominating your clerk.

Awards ceremony

All of the finalists will be invited to a prestigious awards ceremony on the terrace at the House of Commons on 9 June 2015 where the Under Secretary of State for Education will give a presentation and the winner will be announced.

Reconstituting your governing board

New requirements mean that all LA maintained schools must reconstitute their governing body by September 2015 if they have not done so since September 2012. It's good practice though for all governing boards (including academies and free schools) to review their constitution and membership periodically.

Firstly, think whether your structure enables you to carry out the board's role effectively. The three core functions are outlined by the Department for Education:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school ;
- Holding the headteacher to account for the performance of the school
- Ensuring the sound, proper and effective use of the school's financial resources.

Most boards will have responsibility for all three functions. However, the role of local governing bodies in a multi academy trust will depend on which responsibilities have been delegated to them by the Board of Trustees.

Is the board the right size for effective decision-making and the work which needs to be done? There are still rules as to different categories of governors a board must have but there is more flexibility.

The agreed constitution then needs to be populated with skilled and committed people. A skills audit should be conducted so that the strengths and weaknesses of the board are identified to allow any current or future vacancies to be targeted at creating a diverse and skilled board. The NGA skills audit was recently updated, and includes a matrix (available at www.nga.org.uk/skillsmatrix.aspx) to allow boards to collate the information.

If the board is reducing its size, there may well be a role for the chair in talking to the governors that have played less of a role. Where there are more governors in one category than there are positions, the governors in the other categories will decide who remains in post based on their contribution to effective governance.

The NGA Constitution Q&A (available at www.nga.org.uk/constitution.aspx) contains much more detail on reconstitution. The next version (coming soon) will be open to non-members, along with a one page document on the process of reconstitution. GOLD members of NGA can email gold@nga.org.uk if they have a question on this or anything else.

New Ofsted guidance

In July, Ofsted revised its guidance on school inspections by combining all its guidance documents (including subsidiary guidance) into three documents: *The framework for school inspection*; the *School inspection handbook*; and *Inspecting safeguarding in maintained schools and academies*. The content has been largely rearranged, but there are some changes, including an emphasis on promoting British values, judging how schools track

progress following the removal of National Curriculum levels, and the school strategy.

Members of the NGA will be able to download a briefing on the changes and a Q&A on preparing for Ofsted at www.nga.org.uk/ofsted.aspx.



Pay Decisions Autumn 2014 – Are you ready?

This autumn, the first pay decisions will be made following the introduction of performance related pay (PRP) for all teachers in September 2013. In autumn 2013, governing boards should have adopted a new pay policy to take account of the requirement for PRP for all teachers (this was already in place for the leadership team or those on the upper pay range). Appraisal policies should also have been amended to make the explicit link to pay.

Governing boards need to have established appropriate mechanisms for considering and making pay decisions, either through a separate pay committee or an existing committee (e.g. staffing/resources) that includes pay within its remit. Committee members should be properly trained to deal with any appeal hearings.

During the first half of term, teachers' line-managers should carry out the end of year appraisal meeting and make a pay recommendation. The headteacher and senior leadership team (SLT) should then carry out a moderation process to ensure that all appraisers are working to the same standard and in line with the school's pay policy. Where there are a large number of different appraisers, this is especially important.

Pay recommendations must be in line with the school's pay and appraisal policies, which should set out what level of performance is expected for a teacher to progress up the pay range, and what level of performance would lead to exceptional progression.

FFT Aspire and new dashboard

This term, the Fischer Family Trust (FFT) will be launching its new data tracking and evaluation tool, FFT Aspire. This will replace FFT Live and has lots of exciting new features to help schools get to grips with data. Governors can have their own log ins, and we advise schools to arrange log ins for one or two of their governors - perhaps those who are on the committee with responsibility for data

The committee should not simply rubber-stamp recommendations, but consider the following questions:

- Has the policy been applied consistency?
- Were all objectives SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound)?
- Did staff have equal access to CPD and support?
- Were mid-year reviews carried out?
- What evidence has the appraiser considered?
- Is it appropriate and in line with what was agreed at the beginning of the process?
- What moderation took place by the head/SLT?
- Will the teacher be surprised not to progress?
- Could this decision be explained and evidenced if challenged?
- Have applications for upper pay range been assessed according to the criteria in your policy?
- Do outcomes show that any particular group men/women, BME staff have better/worse outcomes compared to the average?

The National College for Teaching and Leadership developed free workshops for governors on this topic. Each governing board is entitled to send three governors/trustees. Details of providers in your areas can be found [online](#).

tracking. There will also be a new improved Governor Data Dashboard, which will remain free of charge for all subscribing schools to download, and updated guidance for governors. This will be available on 23 October.



Trojan horse report and briefing

The NGA has produced a comprehensive briefing note concentrating on [lessons for and recommendations on governance](#) for our members, but here are some key points for governors:

1. **Act according to the seven principles of public life:** integrity; selflessness; objectivity; accountability; openness; honesty; and leadership.
2. Be aware of the **potential for conflicts of interest**. If in doubt, avoid getting friends and relations involved.
3. We must ensure that a **small group of people do not get undue influence**. As governors, we need to have courage and challenge each other as well as senior leaders.
4. All governing boards should **review their recruitment practice**. Who appoints whom, and how? Local authorities should be doing the same with LA governor nominations.
5. The governing board should ensure it **listens to the range of views within the parent body and community**, and does not pay undue attention to a vociferous minority.
6. The investigations reported governors and trustees **becoming involved in operational matters**. There is no excuse for this - there is very clear advice available about the role of governance, for example in NGA's [Welcome to Governance](#) guide.

7. Governing boards needs to ensure the school's curriculum is **broad and balanced**, and provides for the spiritual, moral, social & cultural (SMSC) development of their pupils.

8. These reports highlighted dysfunctional relationships between governing boards and headteachers. This will not happen if there is a **relationship based on trust and respect**, with all parties understanding their relative roles. See the [Chair's Handbook](#).

9. NGA has had growing concerns about **poor HR practice and knowledge** in many schools. Governing boards must ensure that there is a paid member of staff who has a basic HR function.

10. The reports emphasise the governing board's role in **ensuring the safety of pupils**. This includes whether governors need a DBS (Disclosure & Barring Service) checks ([Governing Matters](#) March 14 p27).

Members of the NGA will be able to download the full [briefing on the report and inquiry](#).

Are you a new chair?

The Chair's Handbook

The NGA publishes *The Chair's Handbook*, which is vital for new chairs to help understand the important role you've taken on. Leading governance is a strategic task, and we'll help you through the process from



working with the head and the clerk, improving the skills of the governing board, and leading the day to day business of the board.

It is available for £10 to non-members, or members get a discount of 50%. To order a copy, email [Ravinder](mailto:Ravinder@admin.nga.org.uk) at admin@nga.org.uk, call the NGA office, or go to <http://www.nga.org.uk/Publications/The-chair-s-handbook.aspx>.

Dates for your diary

NGA regional conferences

The NGA is holding two conferences for members in Bradford on 4 October, and Stansted on 18 October. Both of these events will hear from Ofsted about inspections of governance, and a member of the Department for Education's Pupil Premium Team. If you are a member of NGA, you can sign up online at www.nga.org.uk/Events.aspx.

A new world of school governance?

NGA has teamed up with BELMAS to host a joint conference on the current developments in school governance. BELMAS (The British Educational Leadership Management and Administration Society) is an independent voice supporting quality education through effective leadership and management. Its members are a mixture of practitioners in schools, colleges and universities and working academics, bringing together the theoretical and the practical and encouraging stimulating debate at its events.

At the conference, we will be exploring whether current developments in structures and practice are appropriate in ensuring that the purpose of school governance is achieved. Who will hold governing boards to account? Indeed, what evidence do we have about what is occurring and what evidence do we need to enable current policy to be evaluated and future policy to be effectively grounded? We will hear from Graham Stuart MP (Chair of the House of Commons Select Committee on Education), Chris James (Professor of Education Leadership and Management from University of Bath), Chris Caroe (Head of School Governance DfE), and Emma Knights (CEO, NGA).

The event will take place on Friday 14 November in Birmingham. You can book your place at: www.belmas.org.uk/Events/One-Day-Event---A-New-World-of-School-Governance/21300.

NGA Annual Conference and AGM

This year's NGA annual conference and AGM will be taking place on Saturday 15 November in Birmingham. At this year's conference, Matthew Taylor, Chief Executive at RSA, will be discussing creating change in education and we will hear from Mike Cladingbowl, Ofsted, discussing inspecting following the publication of the Trojan Horse reports.

Book your place on the NGA website: <http://www.nga.org.uk/Events.aspx>

Academies Show

The next Academies Show takes place on 26 November in Birmingham. NGA will once again be running sessions at the show, including a Q&A Session 'A *spotlight on governance*'. The Show is free to attend and welcomes delegates from any type of school. Come visit the NGA at stand 402!

Book a place on the Academies Show website: www.academiesshowbirmingham.co.uk.

Membership of NGA

If you have found this bulletin useful, please consider joining the NGA. We have two levels of membership for schools: Standard (£75 per year) or GOLD (£260 per year). Both memberships will cover the school for up to 25 governors/trustees, giving them access to a wealth of resources online.

Standard membership benefits

- Access to all of the Guidance Centre online for up to 25 governors/trustees
- Two copies of *Governing Matters* to the school, and three to the home address of named governors
- One free place at regional meetings
- One free place at national conferences
- A weekly newsletter for all governors
- NGA guides at 50% off

GOLD membership benefits

- Access to all of the Guidance Centre online for up to 25 governors/trustees
- Two copies of *Governing Matters* to the school, and one to the home address every governor
- Three free places at all the NGA events
- A weekly newsletter for all governors
- Access to the NGA legal advice service *GOLDline*
- Free copies of *Welcome to Governance* for every new governor
- One free copy of *The Chair's Handbook*

Scholarships for the Chair's Development Programme

The Chair's Development Programme has an RRP of £350, but the National College is providing scholarships for some participants to make the programme as accessible as possible. There are two types: a full scholarship of £350 for participants from small schools (100 pupils or less according to the most recent Pupil Level Annual School Census) or a part scholarship of £175 for participants from schools that are 'satisfactory' or 'require improvement.' There is a limited fund, so apply early to make sure you receive

one of these scholarships. You have to apply via your training provider.

Leading ►►
Governance

If you think you meet the eligibility criteria and are based in one of the areas in which the Leading Governance partnership is delivering the training, please email info@leadinggovernance.org to reserve your scholarship while funds last. If we don't operate in your area, we can let you know who does.

