

## Strong Governance, Strong Schools

Welcome to the second 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.

The National Governors' Association (NGA) 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).

## Governors awarded in New Year Honours List

Happy New Year and congratulations to everyone who received an honour in the Queen's New Year Honours list 2015. It is always a pleasure to see honours specifically for governance and this year we are also very happy to see in the mix two governors from federations.

Hats off to NGA's very own chair, Ian Courtney. Ian was awarded an MBE for his services to Dartmoor Federation (West Devon). Congratulations to Kit Wells (officially Christopher) chair of the Federation of Gislingham and Palgrave Primary Schools (Suffolk): winners of NGA's outstanding governing body award in 2013. Also to Liz Garnham whom, as well as being vice chair of the Birmingham Governors' Network, is also member of NGA's special schools group.

Those receiving awards for school governance include: Margaret Brown (schools in South London), Patricia Burns (Appleby Grammar, Cumbria), John Hall (Hollybank School Trust, West Yorkshire), Timothy Meynell (Alconbury Church of England Primary, Cambridgeshire), William Patterson (Northern Ireland) and Sandra Simmons (Kilgarth Special School, Merseyside).

## A message from Ian Courtney, MBE, NGA's new chair

I am honoured by the faith my fellow directors have shown in electing me. Duncan Haworth will be a hard act to follow and I'd like to thank him publicly here for his huge contribution and commitment to the NGA.

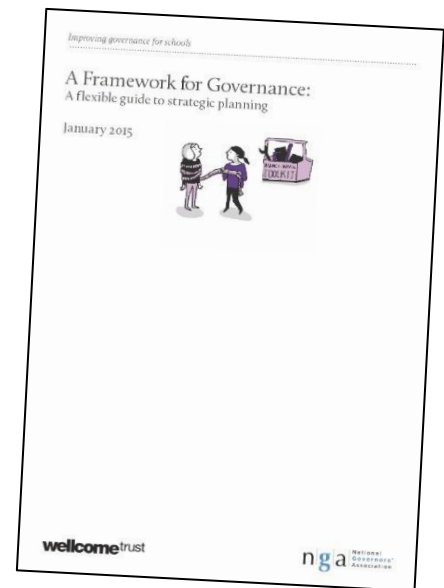
I have been a director of the NGA for three years and a school governor for 15 years. I chair the Devon Association of Governors, the Devon Education Forum and the Dartmoor Co-Operative Learning Trust. Outside of school governance, I spent 6 years as chair of a medium-sized charity working on the education, training and rehabilitation of young offenders in the South West. I have worked for NatWest for 37 years, latterly as a commercial manager working with stressed businesses - very much a people centred specialism which, whilst stressful, was also extremely rewarding.

I have always believed it's wrong to take on a job unless and until you know you will be able to commit the time and energy to do it well. Chairing the NGA is a high profile, demanding role and - having just taken early retirement - I feel confident that the time is right. Here's to a busy year!

## NGA and Wellcome Trust launch Framework for Governance

The National Governors' Association (NGA) and the Wellcome Trust have jointly developed the Framework for Governance, an essential document for all governing boards to help them effectively carry out their vital role. It is a flexible guide, so can be used by any school regardless of phase, type or governance structure.

Strong school governance is arguably more important now than it has ever been - governing boards have more responsibility and are held accountable for the performance of the school more rigorously than ever before. The Framework for Governance aims to help governors and trustees successfully meet these challenges. It sets out how governors can evaluate their own practice, using *Twenty key questions for a governing board to ask itself*; how to set the strategic direction for a school; and how to monitor progress against the strategy using high-level performance indicators that go much further than just exam results.



The Framework for Governance was developed following the pilot of the Wellcome Trust's 'Recommended Code of Governance'. It was piloted in 21 primary, secondary and special schools from autumn 2012 and has been revised by the National Governors' Association in collaboration with the Wellcome Trust in light of the findings from the pilot.

The Framework for Governance launches on Thursday 8 January 2015. All schools will be emailed an electronic copy of the Framework, which will also be available to download free of charge from the NGA website - <http://www.nga.org.uk/Guidance/Workings-Of-The-Governing-Body/Governance-Tools/Framework-for-Governance.aspx>.

## Scholarships for the Chair's Development Programme

The Chair's Development Programme has an RRP of £399, but the National College for Teaching and Leadership is providing scholarships for some participants to make the programme as accessible as possible. There are two types: a scholarship of £320 for participants from small schools (100 pupils or less according to the most recent Pupil Level Annual School Census) or a part scholarship of £200 available to any existing or aspiring chairs regardless of the Ofsted category of their school. There is a limited fund and may not be available in future years, so apply early to make sure that you receive one of these

scholarships. You have to apply via your training provider.

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](mailto: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.

Leading   
Governance

## Teachers' Continuing Professional Development

The quality of teaching is critical to the success of any school. Governing boards are responsible for promoting high standards of education and consequently have a responsibility for ensuring that the teaching in their school is of a high quality. One of the ways that governing boards can promote high standards is by ensuring that there is an appropriate budget set aside for teachers' continuing professional development (CPD). This budget doesn't have to be spent on sending individual teachers on external courses (although such individualised training has its place) but could be spent securing cover whilst the staff have a whole department training session (sometimes called joint professional development).

Ultimately it is for the headteacher and senior leadership team to determine how to allocate the CPD budget, but the governing board has a role to play in monitoring expenditure and impact. In the first instance governing boards should ask whether the CPD expenditure is related to a) the school's priorities and b) identified needs following performance appraisals. If not, then you should seek an explanation - budgets will be tight for the foreseeable future so we need to spend well. Secondly, you need to ask about the intended outcome of any CPD and how the impact will be monitored.

One area of CPD that is too often left to chance in schools is management training, often based on the assumption that because an individual has been promoted s/he will automatically know what good line management looks like, how to carry out performance management and annual appraisal, as well as deal with any issues which crop up during the year. Formal courses can be particularly useful in highlighting 'management HR' - i.e. the stuff that as a manager you need to know so as not to get yourself in hot water, but also to give those you are managing a better experience.

Governing boards have a responsibility for the wellbeing of all their staff. Consequently, it is important that those managing have been given the skills to do so and those being managed are confident that it will be done in a professional and caring manner. This goes for the senior leadership team as well as those lower down the management hierarchy. If management skills are lacking then this should be picked up in the headteacher's performance management and it should be made an objective for the headteacher to improve her/his own management skills and/or those of the Senior Leadership Team.

## New edition of Welcome to Governance available soon

Welcome to Governance is the leading induction guide for governors and trustees in England. As before, the new 7<sup>th</sup> edition is aimed at governors and trustees in both

maintained schools and academies, and covers changes introduced last year including those regarding:

- SEND
- Staffing (including pay and conditions)
- Curriculum and assessment



- Premiums (including pupil premium and universal infant free school meals)

Welcome to Governance costs £10 for non-members, but GOLD NGA members get them free and other members get a 50% discount so the guide will cost you only £5. You will be able to purchase your copy on the NGA website

[www.nga.org.uk/Publications/Welcome-to-Governance.aspx](http://www.nga.org.uk/Publications/Welcome-to-Governance.aspx)

For bulk discounts (over 15 copies) please call the office on 0121 237 3780, or email Ravinder on [admin@nga.org.uk](mailto:admin@nga.org.uk)

## Changes to the SEND Code of Practice

The new SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Code of practice came into force on 1 September 2014 and applies to both maintained schools and academies. The Code is more focussed on the views of pupils and parents and places them at the centre of the decision making process. Governors should therefore seek the views of parents in relation to SEND wherever possible.

Statements have been replaced by Education, Health and Care plans (EHC plans) which cover children and young people aged 0-25 years. Although the Code recommends that governing boards appoint a governor or sub-committee with specific oversight of the school's provision for SEND the responsibility remains with the whole governing board.

The Code sets out the statutory responsibilities of governors:

- Governing boards have a statutory responsibility to use their 'best endeavours' to make sure that a child with SEN gets the support they need
- Governors should ensure that children and young people with SEN engage in the activities of the school alongside pupils who do not have SEN
- Governors should ensure that there is a teacher responsible for coordinating SEN provision (SENCO)
- Governors should be satisfied that parents are informed when the school makes special educational provision for a child
- Prepare an SEND information report and their arrangements for the admission of disabled children, the steps being taken to prevent disabled children from being treated

less favourably than others, the facilities provided to enable access to the school for disabled children and their accessibility plan showing how they plan to improve access progressively over time

The preparation of the SEN information report should detail what the school has in place to support children and young people with SEND. Governors should take this opportunity to review their SEND policy and ensure that it complies with the Code. Paragraph 6.79 of the SEND Code lists the information that must be included in the report. The information published should be updated annually and any changes to the information occurring during the year should be updated as soon as possible.

Although the implementation of much of the Code is operational governors will need to ensure that the school's policy complies with the Code and be satisfied that the school is meeting its requirements. Governors should therefore ask questions about how the needs of children with SEND are met and how staff ensure they are included in class activities.

The support duty has been extended to pupils with medical needs and specific provision must be secured by schools to support such pupils. While the school will be able to access specific guidance on the new duty, governing boards may wish to consider their support for a whole range of additional needs to ensure the school is complying with its legal requirements.

For more on changes to SEND, see a recent article in *Governing Matters*

<http://www.nga.org.uk/getattachment/f33d025e-cfdb-4507-91e5-17077d049dce/NGA-6-7.pdf.aspx>

## Dates for your diary

---

### NGA Spring regional conferences: South West & London

NGA is holding two conferences for members in the South West (Taunton) on 14 March, and London on 18 April. In the South-West speakers will discuss the latest developments in SEND provision and HR practice in schools. Delegates will also have the opportunity to hear from their Regional Schools Commissioners. In London there will also be an Ofsted update. These events are free to NGA members – best value!

Member governing boards are entitled to one or more places at these conferences free of charge (see below for more details of membership benefits) – book places online at [www.nga.org.uk/Events.aspx](http://www.nga.org.uk/Events.aspx).

### NGA regional meetings

There will also be regional meetings to update NGA members in the following locations:

- East Midlands (Derbyshire): 3 March
- North East (Durham): 9 March
- North West (Preston): 11 March
- East of England (Cambridge): 17 March
- West Midlands (Birmingham): 18 March
- Yorkshire and Humber (Wakefield): 23 March
- South East (London): 24 March

Again please book places online at [www.nga.org.uk/Events.aspx](http://www.nga.org.uk/Events.aspx).

### RSA: Governance in education: What next?

The RSA (Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce) is holding an event in Brighton on the future of governance in education. Two high-level debates will ask: what do students need from governors, and are governors fit for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

Contributors include:

- Emma Knights, chief executive of NGA
- Dr Richard Beynon, HMI, former school governor and charity trustee
- Nigel Duncan, principal and chief executive, Fareham College
- David Walker, director of governance, Association of Colleges
- Rosemary Wisdom, senior governance advisor, Brighton & Hove City Council

The event will take place on Wednesday 11 February at the University of Brighton. Tickets cost £7 (£5 for concessions). For more information or to book a place, visit [www.thersa.org/fellowship/where-you-are/south-east/highlights/governance-in-education-what-next](http://www.thersa.org/fellowship/where-you-are/south-east/highlights/governance-in-education-what-next)

## NGA is seeking to co-opt Trustees to its Board

---

NGA's Board of Trustees is seeking additional members with knowledge and experience in the following areas:

- Lobbying at national level
- Marketing/PR
- Legal, in particular corporate/commercial/third sector law

Of course applicants will need to have the time to commit to being a trustee and company director of a small national charity; the NGA Board meets at least five times a year in our offices in Birmingham. Full information about the role, the requirements and the process for appointment will be available on [www.nga.org.uk](http://www.nga.org.uk), but in the meantime any enquires can be sent to [gillian.allcroft@nga.org.uk](mailto:gillian.allcroft@nga.org.uk)

## NGA is also recruiting staff!

NGA are recruiting candidates with excellent school governance knowledge and experience to join our team. The post-holders will join a growing team based in Birmingham.

### Head of Information

NGA is seeking a candidate with in-depth understanding of legislation, practice and policy relating to school governance to oversee the quality and relevance of the information contained within our online guidance centre. Access to our guidance centre is one of the key benefits of our membership offers.

Closing date: noon 2 February 2015

### Head of Training Development

NGA is seeking an experienced candidate, with a background in school governance, to support the development of training materials and programmes. The post holder will work alongside our lead consultant to quality assure our training and consultancy service and support the recruitment of trainers.

Closing date: noon 9 February 2015

More information and application packs for all the roles are available from [www.nga.org.uk/About-Us/Recruitment.aspx](http://www.nga.org.uk/About-Us/Recruitment.aspx) or email [jobs@nga.org.uk](mailto:jobs@nga.org.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*

