

### **Strong Governance, Strong Schools**

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Welcome to the first NGA termly bulletin of the 2015-16 academic year.

The focus of this bulletin is improving good practice in school governance in England. It will be sent directly to all the 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).

### **Register now for scholarships on governance leadership & clerking development programmes!**

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Good quality leadership training is vital to ensuring an effective and dynamic governing board. Leadership programmes for clerks and chairs are licensed from the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) and scholarships are available to subsidise the cost to the school. Funding for these scholarships is only guaranteed until the middle of February so time is running out to register or co-ordinate cohorts to take advantage of this offer.

#### **National Clerks' Development Programme**

Take an important step towards improving the effectiveness of governing boards by developing the skills needed for high quality clerking. It began earlier this school year and has been designed for new and experienced clerks in all school settings.

#### **Governors' Leadership Development Programme**

An invaluable opportunity for chairs and aspiring chairs to develop their board leadership skills. School improvement is a key theme across the programme and the emphasis is on developing participants to support and lead their governing board with confidence.

The **Leading Governance Partnership**, led by the Eastern Leadership Centre and the NGA, is delivering these programmes in the East of England, East Midlands, West Midlands, North West, and London North East regions. Visit [www.leadinggovernance.org](http://www.leadinggovernance.org) to find out more.

There are nine other providers across England: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-governors-professional-development>

## Results of the biggest annual survey of governors and trustees

This year nearly 6000 governors and trustees from across the country took part in the annual NGA/TES survey, which was open for eight weeks in May and June. Thanks for those of you who completed it.

The survey found that 51% of governors are employed, but two fifths of these employees get no time off work to govern. This figure is the same for both maintained schools and academies. Governors of maintained schools are legally entitled to 'reasonable' time off work for governance, suggesting a significant number of employers are not complying with the law. Reticence from the business community may also make it harder for Prime Minister David Cameron to deliver on his party's manifesto pledge to make volunteering for three days a year a workplace entitlement for people working in large companies and the public sector. Speaking at NGA's summer conference in June this year, the secretary of state for Education Nicky Morgan encouraged governing boards to recruit members from business. The survey results suggest, however, that we will need more support from employers to make this happen.

Neil Carberry, Director for Employment & Skills policy at the Confederation of British Industry, said: "Governors with experience of business can bring effective skills and knowledge to any school and help improve overall performance. That means business, schools and the government must do better to attract potential new governors – and firms should make staff aware that they are open to releasing them to carry out these duties. Ensuring employees feel enabled to have this conversation is important, and businesses can help by promoting this kind of volunteering as a valuable opportunity for their staff. It's important that the obligation for firms to release staff for governor duties is extended to academies and free schools."

Other key findings include:

- 93% of governors are in favour of mandatory induction training
- Almost half of respondents would support moves to radically reform Ofsted and the school inspection system
- The majority of academies are not making use of the main freedoms available to them

When asked what they want from the government, a large number of respondents said better funding was a priority. They also want a period of stability and for the government to let teachers teach without interference.



NGA members can read about the findings in full in the September/October edition of *Governing Matters*.

## KIDS charity seeks examples of SEND pupils using personal budgets

Following the implementation of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of practice and the availability of personal budgets, KIDS charity is carrying out research on how personal budgets are being used by children and young people.

They are looking for examples of how pupils with special educational needs and disabilities are accessing and using personal budgets in schools. KIDS charity would therefore like to hear about whether pupils are using their personal budgets in schools and, if so, how they are being used.

If anyone has any details or examples on the use of personal budgets in schools, please email [rani.kaur@nga.org.uk](mailto:rani.kaur@nga.org.uk)

## Forthcoming publication: *Welcome to a Multi Academy Trust*

NGA published the seventh edition of *Welcome to Governance*, our induction guide for new school governors, in January. Our second induction guide, *Welcome to a Multi Academy Trust: A guide for newly appointed trustees*, is specifically aimed at those sitting on the trustee board of a multi academy trust (MAT) and will be published later this term. The guide will provide high quality practical information on MAT governance structure and practice for new trustees - whether they have previous experience of governing in standalone schools or organisations in other sectors – and senior leaders.

For more details as they become available, keep an eye on our communications and [www.nga.org.uk/publications](http://www.nga.org.uk/publications).

## New in the Guidance Centre

The Guidance Centre is the part of our website where NGA members can find all the advice, guidance, and research documents that we produce in one place. Recent updates include:

- Register of interests
- PE and sport premium for primary schools
- Youth Sports Trust information sheets for governors
- Assessment without levels
- Complaints guidance and model procedure
- Guidance on the new legal requirements for information on school websites
- Briefings on changes to Ofsted's framework for school inspection and the Academies Financial Handbook



If you are an NGA member, why not take a look at [www.nga.org.uk/Guidance](http://www.nga.org.uk/Guidance)

## Are we effective?

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Every governor takes up their post with the aim of making a positive contribution to children's education and the role of the governing board is absolutely vital to the success of a school, whatever its legal structure. Therefore it should be no surprise that, at one time or another, most governors find themselves wondering: are we as effective as we could be, and how can we know for sure? Helping governors to answer these questions is a vital strand of NGA's work and we are pleased to be able to offer a range of options to governing boards:

### Skills Audit and Matrix

NGA encourages all governing boards to use a skills audit to help them identify any skills and knowledge they still need to deliver their functions effectively. To make it easier to get a view of the skills across the governing board as a whole, we've also produced a skills matrix, which can be used to collate governors' responses from the skills audit. This is to enable governing boards to ensure that they have sufficient expertise to carry out their core functions effectively. This free resource was updated in September 2015 can be downloaded from the NGA website: [www.nga.org.uk/skills-audit](http://www.nga.org.uk/skills-audit)

### New for 2015/16: Governing Board Online Self-Evaluation

The *Twenty questions every governing board should ask itself* ([www.nga.org.uk/20Questions](http://www.nga.org.uk/20Questions)) are among the most widely used tools for governing board self-evaluation and this year a dedicated set of questions for the boards of multi-academy trusts was launched ([www.nga.org.uk/21Questions](http://www.nga.org.uk/21Questions)).

The NGA is very conscious of the enormous time commitment already required of governors and clerks and so has teamed up with Evalu8 to provide an online version of both sets of questions which provides easy to assimilate feedback and analysis. The package includes a telephone mentoring session with an NGA consultant who will ensure that key areas for development are identified and will contribute ideas and suggestions for improving governance practice. For further details and to book your online self-evaluation at the special introductory offer price go to [www.nga.org.uk/GBEvalu8](http://www.nga.org.uk/GBEvalu8).

### Chairs of Governors' 360 Appraisal

How do you know if you have – or are – a good chair? The NGA 360 appraisal has been developed especially for chairs of governors. To find out more or purchase the 360 package, visit [www.nga.org.uk/360Review](http://www.nga.org.uk/360Review)

### External Reviews of Governance

Since the launch of our Consultancy and Training team in 2012, NGA has amassed a wealth of experience in carrying out external reviews of governance in all types of schools and a whole range of circumstances. We are able to offer bespoke options for individual schools, federations, and multi-academy trusts, all of which are carried out by experienced and professional NGA consultants and quality assured by NGA. To find out more, visit [www.nga.org.uk/Reviews](http://www.nga.org.uk/Reviews).

### Peer Review

A peer review is a process whereby multiple governing boards agree to review each other's practice in a positive, professional, and confidential manner. A consultant facilitates workshops for all participants at the beginning and end of the process, offers support and encouragement, and conducts an end of process evaluation. For more, visit [www.nga.org.uk/PeerReview](http://www.nga.org.uk/PeerReview)

## Senior leader recruitment: when statistics don't tell the full story

A contribution from NGA sponsor TES Prime. [www.tesprime.com](http://www.tesprime.com)

There are plenty of commentators telling us how difficult it is to recruit a school leader and each year EDS Vactrack data offers a neat state-of-the-market summary. This information tells us about the re-advertising rates for maintained schools seeking to appoint a new headteacher.



The headlines tell us that, in 2013/14, 25% of secondary schools had to re-advertise a headteacher position whereas 40% of primary schools had to. There is massive regional variation with re-advertisement rates climbing as high as 47% for primary schools in London and East Anglia. We have become accustomed to these shocking numbers; however, what is most surprising is that those numbers haven't changed much in a decade (27% of secondary schools and 37% of primary schools re-advertised in 2003/04). For those of us who have been involved in recruitment at this level for some time it is difficult to reconcile the statistics. Recruitment feels more challenging than ever and far fewer candidates apply for each role. What the statistics can't capture is the changing recruitment strategies schools are using to get the right person.

Firstly, there is the use of and the principles of head-hunting. The central philosophy for a head-hunter is that the right person is not necessarily looking to move. Efforts need to be made to engage and nurture those qualified candidates.

Secondly, there is better talent management in the sector. MATs, federations and partnerships provide the opportunities for candidates to develop without having to look outside their cluster or trust. Leaders have a sharp eye on growing and retaining talent, understanding that the strongest candidates are often in the building already.

Thirdly, interim leaders are increasingly being used and not just as a stop-gap measure. Schools are using their networks to bring in associates for a particular project and interim leadership is no longer seen as career suicide. Interim or Portfolio careers are an attractive option in other sectors and this trend is slowly filtering into school leadership.

The biggest change of all is in the mind-set of the recruitment panel. Headteacher recruitment has always been described as a two-way process but now it is starting to feel like one. Modern processes are often highly personalised and recognise that candidates have many options. They are more discursive. That is good news. With an understanding of the challenges in the market and a proactive approach, no recruitment problem is insurmountable.

Headteacher recruitment was a major issue highlighted by responses to the NGA/TES survey: over a third of respondents said that they found it difficult to recruit staff to senior posts. NGA and NCTL have produced a guide to selecting and recruiting a new headteacher [www.nga.org.uk/recruitingguidance](http://www.nga.org.uk/recruitingguidance) and, if your school is not currently part of a group, you could consider exploring collaborative working as a solution.

## The Education and Adoption Bill

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One of the first pieces of legislation announced by the new government was the Education and Adoption Bill. This relatively short bill applies to maintained schools only. It will provide the secretary of state with more extensive powers to intervene in maintained schools, enshrine in legislation the existing practice that schools deemed to be 'inadequate' by Ofsted will be converted to academy status; define 'coasting' schools and make them eligible for formal intervention.

NGA is concerned about the wide-ranging powers the bill would give to the secretary of state and her agents. We are especially concerned because the headteacher boards (HTBs) set up to support and advise RSCs lack governance expertise. In our view, the very name of the board suggests a fundamental misunderstanding as to who is being held to account by the RSCs: it is not the executive of the school but the board of trustees whose performance is under scrutiny.

The bill removes the requirement for any consultation (with governors or parents) about the academisation of a school which has been judged 'inadequate' by Ofsted or about the nominated sponsor. NGA lobbied hard during the passage of what became the Academies Act 2010 to ensure that consultation was compulsory and is concerned that it is being removed because in a very few cases conversion has been delayed.

The other big question with these proposed changes is where the capacity is in the system to take them on. The existing role of the RSCs in overseeing the academies in their region is already an enormous undertaking for one person with a small number of permanent staff and an advisory board. The extension of RSC powers to intervene in maintained schools will be a significant additional workload. There is also already a shortage of high-quality sponsors, therefore it is not clear that there is capacity within the academy system to take on potential swathes of underperforming schools.

The bill has passed through the House of Commons without amendment and will now be considered by the House of Lords. NGA will continue to make representations based on our concerns and those of members. We will also be giving evidence to the select committee's enquiry on the role of the RSCs in October.

The Department for Education are consulting on regulations defining 'coasting', which would apply from September 2016. To be classed as 'coasting' under these regulations, a school has to meet two measures in each year of a three year period:

- For primary schools these relate to attainment at KS2 and levels of progress between KS1 and KS2.
- In secondary schools the attainment measure relates to five GCSEs at A\*-C (60% of pupils reaching this level) and progress relates to the percentage of pupils making expected progress in English and maths between KS2 and KS4.

Although the regulations will apply to local authority maintained schools only, NGA understands that the Department will identify academies whose performance indicates that they are 'coasting' against this definition.



## Membership of NGA

If you have found this bulletin useful and aren't currently a member of NGA, please consider joining. We have two levels of membership for schools: Standard (£77 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 and a weekly newsletter tailored for governance every Friday in term-time.

	Standard governing board	GOLD governing board	Corporate	Local association	Individual governor
Weekly e-newsletter	✓	✓	✓ + termly bulletin	✓ + termly bulletin	✓
Access to members' area of website	✓	✓	For up to 10 staff members	✓	✓
Governing Matters magazine	Two copies sent to school, three to governors' home addresses	Sent to home addresses of all members of governing board	Up to 10 copies	Up to 25 copies to the executive committee	One copy to home address
NGA summer conference	One free place	Three free places	Two free places	Three free places	Places cost £60
NGA annual conference	One free place	Three free places	Two free places	Three free places	One free place
Regional meetings	One free place	Three free places	Two free places	Three free places	One free place
NGA guides	Member discount	One free pack and member discount	Member discount	Member discount	Member discount
Access to GOLDline Advice Service	X	✓	X	✓	X
Free governor induction certificate	X	✓	X	X	X
Annual cost (as at April 2015)	£77	£260	£288	Fees vary: please enquire	£38

If you have any questions about membership, just give us a call on 0121 237 3780 or email our membership team on [membership@nga.org.uk](mailto:membership@nga.org.uk). If you're ready to join, you can sign up online or download an application form by visiting [www.nga.org.uk/membership](http://www.nga.org.uk/membership).

*Members get free access to events, such as the Annual Conference and AGM taking place on Saturday 14 November in London. To book a place at any of our conferences or meetings, visit [www.nga.org.uk/events](http://www.nga.org.uk/events)*

