
Termly Bulletin: Spring 2015-16

Strong Governance, Strong Schools

Welcome to the first NGA termly bulletin of 2016 and the second of this 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 the 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, see www.nga.org.uk, call 0121 237 3780, or email membership@nga.org.uk

Governance talking points

With research continuing to highlight the benefits of formal collaboration between schools, *governing groups of schools* has been a prominent topic for discussion over the past term. More than half of academies are now part of multi academy trusts, and many maintained schools are coming together in federations. In September, NGA, ASCL and Browne Jacobson launched a joint guide *Forming or Joining a Group of Schools: staying in control of your school's destiny* which spells out the benefits and types of collaboration, as well as the steps senior leaders and governors need to take.

Last term also saw the Government announcement of a new *national funding formula* for schools. NGA has been among many voices campaigning for an overhaul of the schools funding system for many years and was pleased to see the government making the commitment to a fairer formula. Implementation is expected to begin in 2017 and will be preceded by a detailed consultation planned for later this term.

The introduction of a *new Ofsted framework* from September meant that school inspection was again a crucial issue for many governors. New short inspections for 'good' schools meant that many governors are experiencing a distinctly different inspection process from previous years. NGA continues to have a dialogue with Ofsted about how governance is inspected and has become increasingly concerned that the inspectorate's understanding of governance in groups of schools is underdeveloped. NGA responded to Ofsted's call for evidence on governance: [available here](#).

The Education and Adoption bill currently making its way through Parliament introduces a new category of '*coasting*' schools and proposes new powers of intervention for Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) from the 2016-17 academic year onwards. In the light of this, the House of Commons Education Select Committee's inquiry into RSCs' (still relatively new) role has raised significant questions about the role of the 'middle tier' in education.

Changes in legislation or funding for both *early years* and *16-19*

education has been on the minds of governors in settings involved in this provision: read on for more on those changes.

Our case work continues to highlight the importance of high quality *professional clerking* and, with many members reporting difficulties recruiting to the post, NGA has decided to relaunch the Clerking Matters campaign for 2016 with a Clerks Advisory Group due to meet for the first time in February.



Headteacher recruitment has also been a prominent issue, with 43% of respondents to the 2015 NGA and TES survey who had recruited senior staff over the previous year reporting that it had been difficult to find good candidates. More and more, schools are looking at alternatives to the traditional headteacher model, but [initial NGA research](#) into use of the term ‘executive headteacher’ revealed confusion over role and responsibilities.

2016 editions of *Welcome to Governance* and *The Chair’s Handbook*

The eighth edition of *Welcome to Governance* and the fifth edition of *The Chair’s Handbook* are out now. Both guides have been updated to reflect changes in education policy and best practice.

Welcome to Governance is the most widely used induction guide for governors and trustees. This guide is an introduction to the roles and responsibilities of being a governor, and covers both maintained schools and academies. As well as being the perfect companion to induction training, *Welcome to Governance* is an excellent reference resource for governors as they grow into their role.

The role of the chair is to ensure effective governance and lead the governing board to fulfil its function well. *The Chair’s Handbook* is an essential guide for chairs and aspiring chairs of governing boards. As well as a basic introduction, this guide will help you develop your team of governors or trustees, work effectively with the headteacher and senior management team, lead the school toward improvement and manage the strategic business of the board.

How to order

[Purchase copies online](#)

- Members price: £5
- Non-members price: £10 (if you're not a currently a member but you'd like to be, [click here](#))

GOLD members can get a free copy of *Welcome to Governance* for each new governor and a complimentary copy of the *Chair’s Handbook*!

If you order more than 15 copies, you can also take advantage of a bulk discount.

Contact the NGA office for more information or to place a bulk order:

T: 0121 237 3780 E: admin@nga.org.uk



Governors recognised in New Year Honours list

NGA would like to extend heartfelt congratulations to everyone working in education who received an honour in the Queen’s New Year Honours list!

Among the recipients were twelve governors recognised for their services to education, including former NGA chair Judith Bennett, who was instrumental in the formation of the NGA in 2006, current NGA trustee and former chair Duncan Howarth, and Margaret Southworth, a member of NGA’s special schools advisory group.

We actively encourage honours nominations for those who have made a real difference for pupils in school – even more so to a number of schools. So please consider nominating a governor or trustee for the next round of honours. If you’d like to find out more about making a nomination, email mark.gardner@nga.org.uk.



Post-16 area reviews: giving schools with sixth forms a voice in the local 16-19 economy

16-19 education institutions are now faced with a number of challenges. Recent reports from [Ofsted](#) and the [Department for Education/Department for Business, Innovation and Skills](#) show commitment to reforming vocational education and creating more rigorous standards across the sector. Coupled with this, an [Institute for Fiscal Studies](#) report has shown that, between 2010 and 2015, 16-19 education institutions had their budget reduced by 14%. According to the [National Audit Office](#), this has led to many more further education (FE) institutions being in poor financial health.

Because of this, the government have launched a series of post-16 areas reviews across the country. The aim of these reviews is to ensure that the 16-19 sector is financially healthy and that local 16-19 provision is quality, coordinated, and offers young people a wide range of choice. The reviews are being conducted in waves (more will be announced in due course) and will cover a number of selected institutions. A list of area reviews, and what institutions are involved, can be found [here](#). The area reviews will be led by a local steering group, which will consist of the chair of governors from each institution involved; representatives from the relevant local authority and any local enterprise partnerships; college and further education commissioners; and regional school commissioners. Once the review is complete, each steering group will produce a report which may make recommendations ranging from no further action to proposing that institutions formally collaborate. Although it is up to each governing board to decide whether to accept the review groups' recommendations, the government may intervene if it believes an FE institution is being financially mismanaged.

The recommendations of these reviews may change the dynamic of FE in the local area. Unfortunately, schools with sixth forms will generally not be directly involved in the review process (although schools can 'opt in' to discussions if the local steering group allows). Nevertheless, schools should be aware of the knock on effect that the steering group's recommendations may have on any sixth form provision it offers. Given that the aim for the reviews is to coordinate the local FE economy, it is important that schools with sixth forms also engage in discussions and consider these reviews carefully.

For more on the sixth form area reviews, [click here](#).

New NGA guidance on the statutory framework for school governance

[Our new guidance](#) provides a practical overview of the legal framework in which governing bodies of maintained schools and academy trust boards must operate. This insightful, easy to use guide explores the legal requirements that school's governance arrangements must comply with, including how the membership of the board is decided, how meetings will be held and how decisions will be made.

Other recent additions to the Guidance Centre include Information that must be on your School Website; A Governors' Guide to Sixth Forms; The Right People Around the Table: a guide to recruiting school governors and trustees; the NGA Guide to Co-Chairing; the new NGA Complaints Guidance and Model Procedure – and much more.

Visit www.nga.org.uk/guidance





The impact of the Childcare Bill

Most people will be aware of the Childcare Bill that is currently working its way through the House of Commons. The main purpose of the Bill is to increase the entitlement to free childcare places from 15 to 30 hours a week, 38 weeks of the year for working parents (see [here](#) for the criteria that parents must meet in order to qualify); this was a key Conservative manifesto pledge during the 2015 general election campaign.

The responsibility to make that childcare available is placed upon local authorities by s. 2 of the Bill. This duty is part of wider regulation-making powers that the Childcare Bill grants to the Secretary of State (SoS), which have been criticised by Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee as being inappropriately broad. Amongst other things, the Bill allows for the SoS to set the terms for the provision of the childcare (for example, what hours, where it is to be situated, and what kind of provision is to be made) and establish the terms between the local authorities (LAs) and the providers of the free entitlement (for example specifying funding rates and support services to be offered by the LA). The explicit details will be established in regulations.

So what does this mean in practice? There are three key policy points to bear in mind for planning ahead:

- As mentioned, the entitlement to free childcare for three and four year olds has increased. There are questions as to where the additional capacity in the system is for these additional places and there will be a greater burden on the LA to find them. Options include expanding nursery provision in schools, opening new maintained nurseries or expanding existing ones, or incentivising PVI providers to expand their provision.
- An early years national funding formula has been announced, which will be consulted upon in 2016. Its implementation could alter the amount of money that the LA receives in the early years block of Dedicated Schools Grant, and could, therefore, impact the rate paid to providers. Furthermore, the department has announced an increase in the average rate of funding from £4.56 to £4.88 for three and four year olds and £5.09 to £5.39 for two year olds. There are mixed messages as to whether this is enough to cover the cost of provision.
- Finally, LAs are currently required to publish information about the provision of childcare in their local area. The increase in the amount of provision available will mean there is more information to be provided, and so LAs should be prepared to place extra resources into doing this.

At present, the government is proposing early implementation of the new entitlement from September 2016, with full implementation commencing in September 2017. NGA is producing its own Governors' Guide to the Early Years which provides guidance to school governing bodies looking to open a new early years provision or expand an existing one, which will be published in our Guidance Centre later in 2016.

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 e-newsletter tailored for governance every Friday in term-time. GOLD members have access to our GOLDline Advice Service.

Full details of membership benefits can be found at www.nga.org.uk/membership

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.



Upcoming events

A chance to hear from Regional Schools Commissioners at some of NGA's regional events

We are pleased to invite Regional Schools Commissioners to be our keynote speakers at our regional conferences taking place in the North West, West Midlands and South East. We will also be focussing on financial efficiencies in the school and exploring that what new models of schools groups mean for local governance. The regional conferences are an opportunity for NGA members to discuss current issues with other governors from the region, share good practice, hear about upcoming changes and influence NGA's thinking on topical issues.

- **South East:** Saturday 27th February, 10.00-15.00, Reading
- **North West:** Saturday 12th March, 10.00-15.00, Liverpool
- **West Midlands:** Saturday 19th March, 10.00-15.00, Birmingham

We will also be holding regional meetings on the following dates. As well as discussing the latest policies and best practice guidance, we will be asking your views on the question: Does every school need its own governing body?

- **London:** Tuesday 1st March, 18.00-20.00, central London
- **South West:** Saturday 5th March, 11.30-14.00, Taunton
- **Yorkshire & Humberside:** Monday 7th March, 18.00-20.00, Wakefield
- **North East:** Monday 14th March, 18.00-20.00, Durham
- **East Midlands:** Tuesday 15th March, 11.30-14.00, Northamptonshire
- **East of England:** Tuesday 15th March, 15.30-18.00, Bury St Edmunds

Governing boards that are NGA standard members are entitled to one free place, corporate members have access to two free places, and governing boards with GOLD membership or local associations with NGA membership can send up to three delegates.

With standard membership costing just £77 per year – cheaper than many organisations' conference fees – and including access to high quality guidance and information for the whole governing board, if you are keen to attend do consider becoming a member.

Clerking Matters 2016: get involved in shaping the campaign

We are pleased to announce the first meeting of NGA's Clerks Advisory Group. We hope that the group will have two functions: acting as a forum for clerks to share good practice and highlight any issues they would like to be taken forward by NGA, and also providing a focus and advice for the next phase of the Clerking Matters campaign in 2016. The meeting will take place at NGA's offices in Birmingham on Monday 15 February 2016 beginning at 12 noon. Clerks interested in attending should email rani.kaur@nga.org.uk.

Special School Governors' Advisory Group

The next meeting of the NGA Special School Governors' Advisory Group will take place on Tuesday 23 February 2016. The purpose of the group is to ensure the views of special school governors are represented at both national and regional level by feeding into NGA policy making and submissions. Meetings are open to all special school governors who are members of NGA and are held at the NGA offices in the centre of Birmingham.

Members wishing to book a place at any event should visit www.nga.org.uk/events
