
Termly Bulletin: Autumn 2016/17

The focus of this bulletin is updates on key developments in school governance in England. It has been 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.

Results of the year's biggest survey of governors and trustees



The NGA/TES survey of governors and trustees is our annual temperature check on governance across the country. This year we received an impressive 5000 responses, so thank you to all those who took part.

Governors and trustees delivered a damning verdict on government policies, with more than half of respondents giving a 'very negative' assessment of the government's first year in office (the survey was taken in the summer term 2016): 52% compared to just 12% who registered a positive view.

Other key findings include:

- The proportion of respondents governing at academies jumped from 27% last year to 32% this year. 15% govern at a standalone academy (16% last year) and 17% govern in a multi academy trust (11% last year).
- In the past year, 14% of respondents had considered academy conversion but decided against it. The most common reason was that governors didn't think there would be sufficient educational benefits (74% of this group). There is little appetite for universal academisation, with only 7% of all respondents supporting this.
- The majority of governing boards (85%) have fewer than 15 members. 42% of respondents reported having no vacancies, with 28% having one and 20% two. Just over half found recruiting governors/trustees difficult, with this being felt most acutely in the South West.

- Over a third of respondents reported difficulties when recruiting a headteacher, with little difference between primary and secondary schools. Half of all respondents had experienced difficulties with teacher recruitment. As was the case last year, the regions where this is most difficult appear to be London, the South East and the East of England.
- Almost all respondents said their school offers a broad and balanced curriculum, although 41% of those governing at secondary schools had changed their curriculum offer in response to the EBacc and Progress 8. In many cases these changes have involved limiting pupils' choice of GCSE subjects or reallocating curriculum time from optional subjects to English and maths.

For more detailed analysis of the findings, see our [news page](#) and [blog](#).

There is a wealth of other information about the practice of governance and views of those governing available from the survey: if anyone would like to use these details, please contact Fay.Holland@nga.org.uk

Ofsted assesses the state of school governance

This month the schools inspectorate Ofsted has published a new report on the state of school governance, called '[Improving governance: Governance arrangements in complex and challenging circumstances](#)'.

The report draws on responses to Ofsted's public call for evidence last autumn, evidence from 96 routine inspections or monitoring visits, and dedicated visits made by inspectors to 24 schools which had recently improved standards.

The report identifies "three critical factors that made improvements possible" in schools where weak governance had improved rapidly:

- 1) the schools became aware of the weaknesses in their governance arrangements
- 2) professional knowledge, understanding and insight was developed within the governing board
- 3) clarity about governors' roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability was established.

The report also identifies a number of common issues where governance was not effective:

- many governors lack the expertise to hold school leaders to account
- governors need better access to educational expertise and professional clerking
- recruitment and retention of governors is a challenge in many areas
- clarity about lines of accountability, role and responsibilities is an essential part of effective governance
- weak governance is at risk of going undetected until inspection
- paying chairs of governing boards can act as a means to create a more professional partnership between the board and school leadership team [There was, however,

no evidence of where this has happened. We think Ofsted may be confusing Interim Executive Boards and governing boards]

- commitment to and knowledge of the school's local community is essential to governance.

NGA is not surprised by these findings as they confirm our own work and findings on what makes an effective governing body. NGA's long-established eight elements of effective governance set out the blocks needed for good governance and their absence (as indicated above) will inevitably lead to less effective governing boards.

NGA's eight elements of effective governance:

- 1. The right people around the table*
 - 2. Understanding roles & responsibilities*
 - 3. Good chairing*
 - 4. Professional clerking*
 - 5. Good relationships based on trust*
 - 6. Knowing the school – the data, the staff, the parents, the children, the community*
 - 7. Commitment to asking challenging questions*
 - 8. Confidence to have courageous conversations in the interests of the children and young people*
-

[As reported by TES](#), Emma Knights, chief executive of the National Governors' Association, said: "The Ofsted report is a missed opportunity. What they could have done is said, 'This is what strong governance looks like and these are the challenges that all governing boards face.' There's quite a lot of work in train in order to improve governance, and that perhaps wasn't appreciated enough in the report. The report is very much a deficit model: it's a very basic description of what weak governance looks like. More interesting is the question: is governance getting stronger, and if so, how? Our experience is that governance is improving as there is more good material and support now available to governing boards, [such as our induction guides](#)"

Governing groups of schools: join the community MATs network

NGA welcomes all state funded schools into its membership: local authority maintained schools, academies, free schools and university technical colleges. We don't promote the idea that any one school structure is better than another but we do think there are benefits to be drawn from formal partnerships between schools, whether they are maintained federations or multi academy trusts (MATs). That is why we are launching a new network, Community MATs, to sit alongside Federation First (www.nga.org.uk/federationfirst).

What do we mean by "community MATs"?

Since the publication of the Department for Education's 'Educational Excellence Everywhere' White Paper in March, one of the most commonly expressed anxieties has been that schools will be forced to join remote national MATs which take little account of the school's local

context or character. Despite changes of policy and government, this remains a concern for many governors and trustees.

Some of the most robust and effective MATs that the NGA has come across are based around a group of schools within reasonable proximity to one another. Although there is no single optimum size, smaller groups with pupil numbers in the thousands, rather than tens of thousands, can be highly effective.

The first network meeting took place in Manchester in November, with the opportunity for lively discussion on governance models, knowing your schools, financial effectiveness and controls, and staffing.

The next meeting will take place on *Friday 17 February in Birmingham*: any current MAT trustees or clerks are welcome to join us! Booking will be available through www.nga.org.uk/events. The network is for you and any suggestions on topics of discussion are welcome – email fay.holland@nga.org.uk.

Join the network on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/community-mats-network>

Stay up to date with NGA's induction guides: Purchase copies online at www.nga.org.uk/publications

Welcome to Governance, 8th edition

This induction guide covers the roles and responsibilities of governing in both maintained schools and academies.

"A must read for any governing body library" - Schools Week

"NGA's Welcome to Governance continues to be a valuable resource for thousands of new governors" - Lord Nash, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools

The Chair's Handbook, 5th edition

This guide covers all aspects of this leadership role for new and experienced chairs.

GOLD governing board members receive a free Chair's Handbook and complimentary copies of Welcome to Governance for all new governors. Visit www.nga.org.uk/membership to find out more

NEW: Welcome to a Multi Academy Trust, 1st edition

A guide for newly appointed trustees of MATs

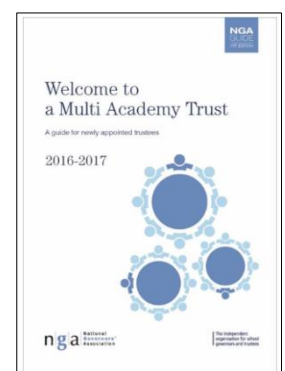
50% discount for other members – only £6 per copy

Bulk orders: If you order more than 15 copies, take advantage of a bulk discount of up to 25%. Contact the NGA office for more information or to place a bulk order. T: 0121 237

3780 E: admin@nga.org.uk



50% discount for other members – only £5 per copy



New funding formula: a fairer portion of not enough

In July, the new Education Secretary Justine Greening MP announced that the new national funding formula (NFF) is to be delayed until 2018-19. The second stage of the consultation was published on 14 December, setting out details of the proposed new national funding formula, to try and overhaul the way schools are funded. At the moment, pupils living just streets away from each other can have significant variation in the amount of money spent on their education.

Although changes will be introduced from 2018-19 when the Department for Education (DfE) uses new methodology to calculate funding for Local Authorities (LAs), 2018-19 will be a transitional year with LAs continuing to calculate funding for schools through their local formula. In 2019-20 the NFF will be implemented with all mainstream schools being funded directly by the DfE using a single national formula. Schools will also continue to have funding “protected” by the minimum funding guarantee of -1.5%.

Emma Knights, Chief Executive of the National Governors' Association, said: “The biggest concern for governing boards, which are responsible for overseeing the financial performance of schools, right now is budget cuts. The NGA has always supported the need for, and aims of, a national funding formula and while this development is welcome news, especially for the parts of the country which are gaining, austerity budgets will have a detrimental effect on the welfare and education of young people in England. More and more governors and trustees are being kept awake at night by the prospect of having to cut staff and increase class sizes.

“NGA has written to the secretary of state for education and the chancellor of the exchequer about the overall size of the schools’ budget. The new formula may mean some pupils get a fairer portion but it will be a fairer portion of not enough. The education of our young people is fundamental to the future prosperity of the country. We urge the government, on behalf of governors and trustees, to make additional money available for 2017-18.”

[The second part of the national funding formula consultation](#) will close on 22 March 2017, with a final decision made before summer. Over 6,000 people, including headteachers, teachers, governors, school business managers, parents and representative groups responded to the first part of the consultation. We would urge governing boards to respond and we are interested in hearing from you. Please send any comments to Gillian.Allcoft@nga.org.uk

[Read more on the proposals.](#)

Get involved in topical debates on the NGA blog

The NGA blog exists to stimulate debates and provoke your thoughts and opinions on all things governance. Keep an eye on the latest posts at www.nga.org.uk/blog and get in touch with your comments!

[Tis the season of good cheer and generosity](#)

Emma Knights, Chief Executive of the National Governors' Association, blogs about a report published by Ofsted in December on the challenges of school governance. Emma thanks governors and trustees across England, but ponders why there is so little appreciation shown by the sector for their immense contribution.

[It's Trustees' Week: learning from each other](#)

In the run up to Trustees' Week 2016, we've been thinking about how schools can learn from trusteeship as practiced in the third sector.

[Let's be open minded when we consider who we employ to lead our schools](#)

Emma Knights considers the new research published by the Centre for High Performance which should give governing boards hiring and rewarding school leaders in England pause for thought.

[Onwards and upwards? The rise of executive pay](#)

NGA's Deputy Chief Executive, Gillian Allcroft, considers the state of executive pay in Education.

Research offers insight for governing boards employing and appraising executive headteachers

The NGA, in partnership with the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and The Future Leaders Trust (now Ambition for School leaders), have produced a suite of six documents exploring the role, responsibilities and deployment of executive headteachers in England.

'Executive headteachers: What's in a name?' draws upon a desktop review of thirty headteacher and executive headteacher application packs, over thirty interviews with governors, senior leaders and executive headteachers and an analysis of the school workforce census data. The findings reveal several different "sub-types" of executive headteacher:

- substantive headteachers of one school who are seconded into another on a temporary basis, usually for school improvement purposes
- leaders of formal groups of schools (MATs and federations)
- leaders of one school that has multiple phases or business interests that go significantly beyond that of a single school (i.e. managing a teaching school)
- executive headteachers who oversee schools within a group but are not the leader of that group

The findings show that executive headteachers generally play a more strategic role than traditional headteachers. Indeed, many employ "heads of school" beneath them to complete the day-to-day running of the school(s) that they oversee.

Of interest to governing boards, the study revealed two distinct challenges when appointing and managing an executive headteacher:

1) *There were some executive headteachers without a clear job description.*

This made it difficult to know where the line should be drawn between the executive headteacher and their head(s) of school in terms of management and strategy at a school level. In addition, many governing boards were not clearly thinking through the strategic reasons for appointing executive headteachers, leading many to define the role once in post.

2) *Several of the governance models identified created duplication and confusion.*

In bigger groups, and MATs with academy committees, the executive headteacher was often expected to report to multiple bodies (governing boards, academy committees or other executives). Problems were more apparent in schools that were not part of formal groups, with some executive headteachers being performance managed by several discrete governing boards and signing multiple contracts for the same role.

Those involved in recruiting executive headteachers, or that deal with schools which employ an executive headteacher, are encouraged to read the full report: visit www.nga.org.uk/execheads.

Looking for new governors?

inspiring governance

Inspiring Governance is the free online matchmaking service, connecting prospective governors with schools and colleges nationwide. Governors seeking new volunteers can view all the volunteers in their area or specify the skills they're looking for, connect with volunteers directly and begin the process of recruiting.

The service is fast and easy to use. Sign up today at: www.inspiringgovernance.org

NGA guidance: [The Right People Around the Table: a guide to recruiting school governors and trustees](#)

Growing Governance

2016 heralded NGA's 10-year anniversary. To help celebrate we launched a national campaign encouraging school governors and trustees to take a critical eye to their vision and strategy. To help, we released a [new resource pack on how to make a vision and strategy](#), we made a video and [used Governing Matters](#) to tell you about how some governing boards are 'growing their governance'. [We also published our 10-year impact report](#).

Watch the video *This is Our Vision* and share it with your schools: <https://youtu.be/nXfjTQcKYIk>

To find out more about Growing Governance, visit



www.nga.org.uk/growinggovernance.

If you'd like us to come and talk at your event about the campaign, email Mark Gardner:
mark.gardner@nga.org.uk.

Dates for your diary

Spring regional meetings and conferences 2017

The dates for NGA's spring regional meetings and conferences are now available. Full details of the topics to be discussed will be available when booking opens. New faces are always welcome so please do join us for these lively and informative events.

Conferences

- South West – Taunton – Saturday 1 April
- North East – Newcastle – Saturday 18 March
- East Midlands – Derby – Saturday 25 March

Meetings

- North West – Wednesday 1 March
- Yorkshire & Humber – Monday 6 March
- East of England – Tuesday 14 March
- London & South East – Tuesday 21 March
- West Midlands – Wednesday 27 March

Multi academy trusts network meeting

The next meeting of our Community MATs network will take place on 17 February in Birmingham.

Clerks' Conference

As part of our Clerking Matters campaign, clerks of governing boards are invited to join the next in first ever national clerks' conference on Monday 20 February in Birmingham.

Members can book places at any of our events by visiting
www.nga.org.uk/events

Membership

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 (£79 per year) or GOLD (£260 per year). Both 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.