

## Termly Bulletin: Autumn 2017/18

This termly bulletin is available free of charge to non-members and is designed to keep all governors up to date with some of the key issues affecting school governance in England.

It is emailed directly to corporate and local association members of NGA to distribute to their wide network of governors. If you have any feedback, comments or questions about the content of the bulletin, please email [fay.holland@nga.org.uk](mailto:fay.holland@nga.org.uk).

### Local associations share experience and look to the future

The NGA was delighted to welcome representatives of 20 local governance associations to a networking meeting on Saturday 16 September. Those present discussed their experiences developing associations, the challenges faced and what the future might hold.

Local associations are independent, volunteer-led organisations which provide a forum for governors and trustees in a local area. Though the associations represented vary considerably in size and serve very different parts of the country, many had similar stories to tell.

Among the issues discussed was the relationship between local associations and local authorities (LAs). Most had constructive relationships but some had been impacted by reducing capacity at the LA. Many local associations were active in the Schools Forum and acted as the collective voice for governing boards in their areas. Some receive support from their LA, often in the form of help with communication and collecting fees. Despite these strong working relationships, attendees highlighted the importance of maintaining independence and the need to challenge the LA (and other bodies) when it is in the interests of pupils.

Despite traditional close ties with LAs, the vast majority of associations represent all types of school, including single and multi-academy trusts. Indeed, associations can be a powerful unifier in an increasingly mixed system.

The time required to run an association was another prominent topic. Many associations find it difficult to recruit new volunteers onto their executive committees (particularly younger people, who often work long hours) which means that they can become reliant on a small number of longstanding members giving up a significant amount of time. This has obvious risks for long term sustainability.

In order to make the best use of their time, attendees suggested associations should stick to the things that are unique about their offer and be careful not to duplicate what others, such as the LA or national leaders of governance (NLGs), provide.

Looking to the future, those present discussed innovative membership models and the place of local associations in governance support.

The network now hopes to meet on a more regular basis. If you chair a local association that was not represented and would be interested in future events, keep an eye out for future dates.

The meeting will also feature on the regional pages of the January/February edition of NGA's magazine, *Governing Matters*.



## Funding the Future: share your views

On Thursday 14 September, Secretary of State for Education Justine Greening [announced details of the new national funding formula for schools](#). This is the outcome of the second stage of the consultation, which closed in March ([view NGA's response](#)), and follows [July's announcement](#) of £1.3 billion additional funding for the core schools budget over the next two years.

More details are [available on the Department for Education's website](#) including tables where you can see how [your school's budget](#) would be calculated under the national funding formula (NFF). Governors and trustees need to remember that as funding for the next two years will be calculated according to the relevant local authority's formula their actual school budget may not be exactly the same as shown in the tables.

But there is a vital question to consider: is the overall amount of funding for schools enough?

We don't think it is. We support the principles of the national funding formula but ultimately we think it will mean pupils get a fairer share of not enough. School governors and trustees are responsible for the financial oversight of their schools, which includes deciding how the budget is spent. Over the summer, NGA received over 5,300 responses to our annual survey with TES and found funding to be the most prominent challenge reported by governors and trustees. Just 20% of respondents told us they are confident they can manage funding pressures without adversely impacting the quality of education for pupils in their school.

The National Audit Office [reported in September](#) that even with the additional £1.3 billion over the next two years from the government, the cumulative cost pressures that schools face are still estimated to rise from 3.4% in 2016-17 to 8.7% in 2019-20. That's why we've been running a campaign, [Funding the Future](#), to lobby the government to increase school funding and raise awareness of the issue [in the media](#). NGA have [written to the Chancellor](#) ahead of the autumn budget to ask him to "put an end to uncertainty surrounding education funding" and we have also [co-signed a letter](#) as part of a coalition of representative organisations, to urge for an increase to post-16 funding.

You can get involved by writing to your MP to outline the impact of funding on your school or academy ... and don't forget to #TelltheChancellor on twitter.

## School governance in 2017 – findings of the year's biggest survey

NGA and Tes hosted events at the Labour and Conservative party conferences to reflect on the findings of our joint 2017 annual survey. Many thanks to the 5,338 governors, trustees and academy committee members who shared their views during the summer term.

With around 250,000 people serving on school governing boards, this is one of the largest volunteer forces in the country. Despite this, the survey indicated that there is much more work to do on diversity: just 4% of respondents were black, Asian and minority ethnic and just 10% were under 40.

The responses contain some stark messages for the government, particularly on school funding, with as few as 20% of respondents confident that they can manage funding pressures without an adverse impact on the quality of education provided. 56% of those governing secondary schools said they had already reduced the number of subjects on offer and 49% had reduced the number of qualifications on offer.

Many governors and trustees are calling for a period of stability for the education system, with frequent changes to curriculum and assessment – and their impact on staff workload – a common concern.

Governors and trustees wanted to see the expertise of education professionals valued and listened to by those in power. While a smaller proportion of respondents were concerned about staff recruitment



compared to 2016, there was considerable regional variation in how difficult governors and trustees are finding it to attract good candidates.

The clear weight of opinion was that the government should make induction training mandatory for new governors and trustees: 95% of respondents agreed that it should be. This is despite the fact that the vast majority of governors and trustees are already highly skilled people, with four in five currently or previously managers, directors, senior officials or professionals.

While most respondents did not support the idea of paying governors and trustees, concerns were raised about the workload and time required to govern effectively. Almost three in 10 said their responsibilities are not manageable in 20 days per year and the time commitment puts off many potential chairs of governing boards.

[Download the report in full](#)

## Inspiring Governance continues to connect schools with volunteers to drive school improvement



With thousands of schools now registered, the Inspiring Governance service continues to successfully connect prospective governors and trustees with schools who can benefit from their time, skills and experience.

Inspiring Governance is a free online matchmaking service for schools and colleges in England. All volunteers recruited through the service also receive 12 months free support from NGA including access to our online guidance centre, access to our support service and access to eight in-depth modules on Learning Link.

Schools benefitting from the service so far include King's Norton Boys' School in Birmingham and Endeavour Academy Trust in Bristol.

King's Norton Boys' School turned to Inspiring Governance after the Chair of Governors felt they had explored and exhausted all other routes for finding new co-opted governors. Using the platform specifically to increase diversity on their governing board, the school recruited five new governors from the local area with skills that can help to raise specific standards.

For Endeavour Academy Trust, the need to find governors with certain skills to cope with their growth plan led them to use Inspiring Governance as another avenue to reach potential recruits. Searching for volunteers in the local area with the skills, motivations and experience required, the trust recruited three new governors with valuable experience including HR and project management.

To read these case studies in full, and to learn more about Inspiring Governance, visit <https://inspiringgovernance.org/governing-boards/>



## Dates for your diary

### Community MATs network

Are you a trustee or clerk of a multi-academy trust (MAT) board? Don't miss out on the opportunity to share experience and best practice with others through the Community MATs network.

The network was established in 2016 following requests from NGA members for a dedicated forum to discuss key issues in MAT governance. The first year of meetings saw trustees and clerks from across the country come together in lively and constructive discussion. Keep an eye on the [Community MATs web page](#) for updates on the next round of meetings.

Places are free for NGA members. If you have any questions about the network or would like further information, please get in touch with Fay by emailing [fay.holland@nga.org.uk](mailto:fay.holland@nga.org.uk).

### Spring regional meetings and conferences

Twice a year, NGA holds events in each of the nine regions. These are an opportunity for those governing to stay up to date with the latest developments in school governance, to contribute to policy discussions and to network with others across their region.

The dates for the Spring 2018 events are now available and booking will open shortly:

#### Conferences:

- East of England, Saturday 3 March 2018
- Yorkshire and Humber, Saturday 24 March 2018
- London, Saturday 21 April 2018, with a keynote from National Schools Commissioner Sir David Carter

#### Meetings:

- North East, Monday 5 March 2018
- North West, Wednesday 7 March 2018
- South East, Tuesday 13 March
- South West, Saturday 17 March
- East Midlands, Tuesday 20 March
- West Midlands, Wednesday 21 March

## 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 (£85 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 an e-newsletter tailored for governance every Friday in term-time. Group, multi academy trust and local association memberships are also available. GOLD members have access to our GOLDline Advice Service and receive free guides.

Full details can be found at [www.nga.org.uk/membership](http://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](mailto:membership@nga.org.uk).