

Termly Bulletin: Spring 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.

Getting the right people around the table

To support governing boards in recruiting and retaining skilled governors or trustees, NGA has updated and relaunched its well-received guide [the right people around the table](#).

Five short chapters cover:

- 1) evaluating: skills, composition and current practice
- 2) recruiting: attracting good candidates
- 3) appointing: interviewing and references
- 4) inducting: training and support
- 5) succession planning: moving on and ensuring leadership

There are an estimated 250,000 people volunteering as school governors and trustees in state-funded schools in England – the country's largest volunteer force. Despite this, in the [annual school governance survey 2017](#), almost a third of respondents reported that their governing board has two or more vacancies whilst 56% respondents said they found it difficult to recruit. Supported by the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) and Academy Ambassadors, [the right people around the table](#) seeks to support governing boards in recruiting and retaining skilled volunteers.

This guide contains practical advice and actions to evaluate the composition of a governing board, promote vacancies and attract good candidates to the role. It provides recommendations of good practice in appointing candidates, providing induction training for new recruits and succession planning. There are also signposts to further tools and resources provided by NGA such as the [skills audit](#), [model role descriptions](#) and [key questions](#) for governing boards.

The guide is designed to complement Inspiring Governance – a free online recruitment service connecting volunteers interested in serving as governors and trustees with schools who are looking for new recruits. The Department for Education fund the service, which is run by the charity Education and Employers in partnership with the National Governance Association and supported by the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) and Academy Ambassadors.

There are many ways in which [Inspiring Governance](#) can support the recruitment process, including the ability to search for volunteers based on their skills and the free training and support provided to new appointees by NGA.

The right people around the table emphasises that governing boards should carry out a skills audit to identify its strengths and any gaps to fill, states the importance of providing high-quality induction training for new recruits, and highlights the need for governing boards to undertake succession planning. Ahead of the launch of Everyone on Board, a joint campaign from NGA and Inspiring Governance which seeks to increase diversity on governing boards, the guide also asks governing boards to consider whether they reflect the diversity of their local community.



Being strategic: a guide for governing boards

Ensuring clarity of vision and strategic direction is one of the three core functions of governing boards. To assist governors and trustees in their strategic role, the NGA and Wellcome have published *Being Strategic: a guide for governing boards*, three years after the popular original guide – a Framework for Governance – was released.

Following extensive consultation with governors, trustees and senior leaders, drawing on practical experience and real life examples, *Being Strategic* offers a robust annual cycle for creating, monitoring and reviewing strategy, underpinned by strong governance principles. It provides advice, poses questions for governing boards on each stage of the cycle, and supports school leaders in taking a broad, collaborative and long-term approach.

The guidance urges governing boards to look beyond narrow academic performance measures when monitoring the strategy stating ‘in the interest of pupils [the measures] must consider the whole education offer. Not all improvement priorities are quantitative and some of the most important outcomes will not lend themselves to simple quantitative measurement.’

You can access a printer-friendly pdf version of the guide at www.nga.org.uk/beingstrategic. Local authorities and local associations may bulk order (30 minimum) hard copies of the guide. Get in touch with shelby.roberts@nga.org.uk for your free copies!

Getting ready for GDPR

From 25 May, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will replace the current Data Protection act and will apply to all those who process personal data. This includes the processing of personal information belonging to pupils held in educational records and elsewhere and all other personal information held by the school, which identifies living persons (i.e. pupils, staff and parents). The regulation, which has been designed to better protect individuals’ data privacy, will change the way schools handle and manage information. The governing board has ultimate responsibility for matters relating to data protection and will need to ensure that the school complies with the GDPR.

The GDPR imposes new requirements while also strengthening existing rights for individuals. These include:

- a requirement for state schools to appoint a data protection officer;
- school must have a privacy notice or statement, which explains the purposes for processing, and this notice must be clear, plain and intelligible to pupils, staff and parents;
- and an obligation to comply with a ‘subject access request’ within one month of receipt and without a fee charged.

To ensure compliance, schools should ensure policies and procedures that concern the management and processing of data are reviewed by the relevant staff. Schools should endeavour to establish measures which monitor compliance e.g. setting up a working group on data protection. In the first instance, governing boards should be adding GDPR to their next meeting agenda and seeking assurances that relevant staff have received GDPR training and the school is on track to comply with the new obligations, including the appointment of a Data Protection Officer. The importance of ensuring compliance with the GDPR cannot be understated; non-compliance is likely to result in stronger sanctions than currently in place including heavy organisational fines *of anywhere up to 20m euros or 4% of annual turnover*.

It is important that governing boards remain strategic; the actual implementation of measures required under the GDPR is an operational matter for executive leaders. The Information Commissioner’s Officer (ICO) has published a wealth of information on data protection on its [website](#).



New NGA research and guidance exploring headteacher appraisal

NGA's [latest report](#) explores headteacher performance management practice in England. Research conducted between June and September 2017 consisted of a survey of 1164 chairs of governors and trustees of state-schools in England and interviews with 10 individuals (headteachers, chairs of governors and external advisors) involved in the appraisal process.

The findings reveal that, despite having more legislative freedom, many schools continue to follow historic practices based on old regulatory procedures. Although under no obligation to do so, the findings show that: while the appraisal regulations make no reference to panel size, most respondents said that their school, including a large number of academies, put together a panel of two to three governors/trustees. Furthermore, 87% of academies still appointed an external advisor, with many maintained schools and academies using a school improvement partner (SIP) as the external advisor, or using an external advisor recommended by the local authority. Finally, although free to choose any time of year, the majority of schools continued to conduct the headteacher appraisal in the autumn term.

While these findings are not concerning in themselves, it suggests that large numbers of schools have not actively changed the way they conduct the headteacher performance appraisal in recent years. While NGA came across many aspects of good practice in the research, the findings did reveal some areas school may consider reviewing going forward. This includes:

- in schools where management structures have changed significantly (i.e. in multi-academy trusts), there was sometimes tension and confusion as to whether those governing, or other executives leaders above the headteacher, should lead the headteacher appraisal process;
- individuals involved in headteacher appraisal offered a lot of skills and expertise, often from their professional lives. However, the survey findings revealed that panel members were less likely to have received training on headteacher appraisal if they had sat on the panel for less than 6 years, with 42% of panel members with one or less years' experience not receiving any training;
- with regards to the external advisor, nearly a quarter of the governors and trustees surveyed outlined that their headteacher directly appointed the external advisor, potentially affecting their impartiality. The interview data also revealed potential conflicts of interest with schools conflating the SIP/external advisor roles, particularly if there was evidence to suggest that a 'cosy' relationship between the headteacher and external advisor had developed;
- finally, in terms of setting performance objectives, the survey and interviews revealed that those governing were sometimes unclear as to which sources of data were appropriate for judging the headteachers' performance, with governing boards having a tendency to set headteachers unachievable performance objectives and neglecting the headteachers' professional development.

As part of the research, NGA gave eight recommendations to help governing boards consider ways to improve their practice based on each of the challenges identified. NGA's updated headteacher appraisal guidelines will be published on the [Guidance Centre](#) shortly after Easter.

New edition of Welcome to Governance

The new 2018-19 edition of our best-selling guide *Welcome to Governance: a guide for new governors and trustees of single schools* is now available to purchase, with updates on crucial issues such as assessment, school finance, data protection, exclusions and Ofsted inspection. [Find out more.](#)



Dates for your diary

NGA Summer Conference: Saturday 9 June, Manchester

This national conference is an opportunity for governors and trustees to hear eminent speakers, engage in informative workshops, network with other delegates, and share best practice in school governance.

The Secretary of State for Education, Damian Hinds, has been invited to present the keynote address and a full programme of speakers will be confirmed soon.

A series of workshops focusing on current issues affecting school governance at local and national levels will be included. Five workshops will be delivered in the morning session. With a different five workshops delivered in the afternoon session.

Free places are available to NGA members: for more details and to book, click [here](#).

Community multi-academy trusts network

Trustees and clerks of multi-academy trusts (MATs) are invited to two upcoming network meetings: on Wednesday May 16 in London and on Friday June 8 in Manchester. The events will run from 12.00 to 16.00 and include a networking lunch. These are valuable opportunities to discuss the latest issues in MAT governance, share your experiences, and learn from those of others. Book for [London](#) or [Manchester](#).

Academies Show London: Wednesday 25 April, ExCel, London

The NGA are delighted to announce our Partnership with The Academies Show, taking place on 25th April 2018 at the ExCel, London. Amidst an educational climate where crucial challenges of funding, recruitment and assessment and more profound than ever, NGA will be on hand at the Show to offer guidance and expertise. With over 40 hours of CPD certified content, over 3000 visitors and policy updates from the likes of DfE, ESFA and STA, The Academies Show 2018 is not to be missed. As well as hosting a dedicated stand at the event, the NGA team will be taking part in sessions including 'Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential: Understanding the Governments 'Social Mobility Action Plan'.

Other confirmed sessions include:

- Are the Government Reforms Driving the Mental Health Crisis?
- Ministerial Keynote
- The Right People Around the Table: How to Build a Board
- Ofsted Being a Force for School Improvement
- Panel Discussion: Reforming Teacher Training and Development

Join other school leaders and register for your [free pass here](#). This pass includes access to all the content at the show, the exhibition, a free lunch and free parking.

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. 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.