

## January 2014 Bulletin Board

The National Governors' Association is an independent charity representing state school governors from local authority maintained schools and academies. This monthly NGA bulletin board is distributed to local governor associations and co-ordinators of governor services who are members of the NGA so that they can keep governing bodies up-to-date on our work and the changes and developments in governance. So, please help to keep others informed by sharing and distributing this widely. If you are not a member of NGA and have found this bulletin useful, this is only a fraction of the information NGA produces for governors. Please consider joining us: see section H.

If you have any comments on this bulletin or suggestions for future editions, please contact [laura.owen@nga.org.uk](mailto:laura.owen@nga.org.uk).

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### A. NGA publishes research on federations and MATs

NGA has published the final report *The Road to Federation* from our research into governing bodies that consider joining federations and multi-academy trusts (MATs). This one-year study looked at 14 groups of schools that considered creating a federation or MAT, the reasons why governing bodies (GBs) consider federation, who influences the decision, and what barriers are faced. NGA decided to undertake this research project as we were aware that there has been a lack of research on how and why some governors decide to federate and others don't.

The key findings from the study included:

- GBs were often motivated to consider becoming a federation/MAT for a combination of reasons; key drivers were school improvement, saving small schools from closure and sharing a headteacher.
- In most cases the GB was responsible for making the final decision whether or not to join a federation/MAT and the decision is not always made unanimously. Where it was unanimous the school had often previously collaborated with their prospective partner(s).
- The GBs consulted key stakeholders including parents and staff, helping them to identify and address concerns.
- Lack of information & objective advice presented a barrier to some governing bodies.
- For the majority of groups participating in this research, federation has been a great success and afforded all schools involved numerous advantages.

We'd like to thank everyone that contributed to this study and BELMAS for providing funding. ..

There is a [summary report](#) that is publically available, and a [full report](#) that is available to NGA members only. If you have any questions or comments about the report please [email Ellie](#).

## B. Education news

### 1. Ofsted Annual Report 2013

On 11 December, Ofsted released its annual report detailing findings from inspections carried out in 2012/13. The first thing to note, which may not have come across in the press coverage, is that almost 80% of schools are good or better, higher than at any time during Ofsted's existence – yes that's right, the system is not in total crisis. There is of course, a 'but' – the spread of 'good' or better schools is not even, and some children have a better chance than others of attending a 'good' school.

The report confirms that a key element of 'good' and 'outstanding' leadership in schools is having good governance: "Good governance is crucial to tackling underperformance and supporting improvement. Governance that is weak does not challenge the school about its performance or press the school to increase its aspirations." Moreover, governance continues to be focus for Sir Michael Wilshaw, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI), who mentioned it a number of times in his speech and in answers to questions at the launch event: for example, he referred to the reviews of governance in his speech and was critical of those governing bodies that had not acted quickly on recommendations, and when asked why "sponsored academies in deprived areas have made particularly impressive progress", HMCI put this difference down to better governance.

Members can read more on this story in the [newsletter from 13/12/2013](#).

### 2. Pupil premium increase for primary schools announced for this year

The Minister of State for Schools, David Laws MP, has announced an in-year increase in the pupil premium allocations for primary schools for 2013-14. The allocation is being raised from £900 to £953 per eligible child. There will be no in-year increases in the amounts for other pupil premium categories (secondary ever 6 FSM, looked after children and service children).

Mr Laws also confirmed the amounts for pupil premium allocations in 2014-15 as:

- Primary ever 6 FSM - £1300
- Secondary ever 6 FSM - £935
- Service children - £300
- Looked after children - £1900

[Read David Law's speech here](#), or see the [Department for Education information](#).

Governing bodies must review the impact that Pupil premium expenditure has had on the progress of recipients in order to consider what to spend the allocation on in 2014-15. There is supporting material available on the NGA website: <http://www.nga.org.uk>

### 3. Secondary RAISEonline unvalidated data now available

RAISEonline has published reports on unvalidated key stage 4 data for 2014. Governors can request the summary report from their headteacher. RAISEonline has highlighted tables of particular relevance to governors with a letter G at the top corner of each relevant page, but these should be treated as starting points and governors should also be looking at the other tables in the report. [RAISEonline news release](#)

#### 4. New Tech Level qualifications announced

A new range of 'Tech Levels,' backed by leading employers, have been announced. They come in response to the [Wolf review of vocational education](#) in 2011. The new qualifications will be first taught in 2014, and will be recorded in the performance tables from 2017. 142 new Tech Levels are supported by leading businesses or trade associations (including Vauxhall, Lovell, and Kawasaki) and will lead to a recognised occupation, such as agriculture, construction, engineering, or accounting. 87 Applied General Qualifications, endorsed by at least three universities, will provide a broader range of study in a vocational area.

[DfE Press release](#)

### C. Parliamentary news

#### Parliamentary debate on school governance

On Thursday 5 December, there was a debate in Westminster Hall in the House of Commons on the report of the Education Select Committee into the Role of School Governing Bodies and the Government response. The NGA wrote a [briefing on the debate](#) for MPs, and the report of the debate can be found [here](#).

### D. NGA news

#### 1. Lord Nash writes to NGA about young carers

In December Lord Nash, Under-Secretary of State for Schools, wrote to NGA expressing his concerns about the issues faced by young carers, and the impact that this can have on their education. NGA shares these concerns and would like to remind governors to ask school leaders how many pupils are carers and how they are progressing. Our website currently has a number of resources from Southend Young Carers, including a suggested policy statement for schools and top tips for teachers from young carers themselves. We were made aware of these at Southend School Governors' Association's conference last June, at which three young carers presented the challenges they faced with education.

In our response to Lord Nash, we also raised the difficulty in obtaining support for other vulnerable pupils. Governors have been reporting to us a reduction in the ability of a whole range of children's and health services to cope with their needs. There seem to be particular problems with the length of time young people often have to wait for support from mental health services, but we have had reports of a wide range of specialist support services which are not able to take referrals from schools in the way they might have done in the past.

#### 2. *Knowing your school* briefing on staff performance has been updated

An updated version of *Knowing your school: Governors and staff performance* is now available. The updates reflect the introduction of performance related pay and set out what governors need to be doing in response to the changes.

The briefing is available to non-members and can be viewed [here](#).

## E. Dates for your diary

If you would like us to advertise your local event, please email [Laura Owen](mailto:Laura.Owen@nga.org.uk).

### 1. NGA Spring regional conferences

The NGA has been holding 4 regional conferences each year. This spring, it is the turn of the South East and West Midlands. As these conferences have been oversubscribed, we are limiting bookings to NGA members only. If you would like to attend or find out more, visit the [NGA website](http://www.nga.org.uk).

**The topics to be covered include:**

- Ofsted & inspecting governance
- Spending the Pupil Premium to good effect

**South East Conference**

Date: Saturday 1 March 2014  
Time: 10.00 – 15.00  
Location: Guildford

**West Midlands Conference**

Date: Saturday 15 March 2014  
Time: 10.00 – 15.00  
Location: Birmingham

### 2. Independent Academies Association (IAA) National Conference March 2014

The NGA is working with IAA on the governance strand of their national conference on Wednesday 5 March in London. It should be of particular interest to all those governing groups of schools. We'll be exploring how multi-academy trusts and federations are changing and growing in response to new demands, which all governors will find useful. Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education, will deliver the keynote address in the afternoon.



For more information, visit the [IAA website](http://www.iaa.org.uk). Bookings can be made [online](#) or by downloading this [form](#). NGA members have been offered a discounted rate of £175+VAT. You can take a colleague for £125+VAT, so you could ask if your headteacher or another governor also wish to attend.

## F. Consultations since the last bulletin (closing dates are for DfE)

There are no new consultations out. NGA is always interested in hearing governors' views on any subject; please email any comments, or copies of any submission you make to NGA's policy manager: [Gillian.allcroft@nga.org.uk](mailto:Gillian.allcroft@nga.org.uk).

## G. NGA partners

### Free training workshops for governors

The National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) licensees are offering free training workshops for governors, addressing some key strategic policy themes. Look out for dates



National College for  
Teaching & Leadership

of this training this term. The three different workshop themes are:

1. *Understanding and using Performance-related Pay (PRP):* to help governors to think about how they will make pay decisions in Autumn 2014 – to plan to raise performance through pay, whilst minimising appeals and ensuring decisions about policy and reviews can be defended.
2. *Understanding and using RAISE online to improve school outcomes:* to develop the capacity of governors to use RAISE online effectively in order to challenge and support their school's leadership team in their efforts to bring about school improvement.
3. *Improving financial efficiencies in school:* to help governors to ensure school money is well spent.

Schools, including academies, may nominate up to three governors (which can include the headteacher) for a free place at all three workshops. The workshops will last for three hours with a refreshment break.

Visit the [NCTL website](http://www.nctl.org.uk) for more information.

## H. NGA membership benefits

Governing bodies can join the NGA to receive more benefits. Every governor will gain access to the members' only area of the website, and receive the weekly newsletter. Members also receive generous discounts off our publications.

**GOLD governing body membership: £260** ensures in addition that every governor receives NGA's magazine *Governing Matters*, free induction guides, additional event places, and is entitled to advice from the NGA, including **access to our legal advice service**.

**Standard governing body membership: £72** entitles you to five free copies of the bi-monthly magazine, discounts on publications, and a free place at members' events as well as the weekly newsletter and web resources.

**Make sure your association is receiving all its benefits.** If you have not yet given us the names, home addresses and email addresses of your executive members, or if these have changed, please send details to: [membership@nga.org.uk](mailto:membership@nga.org.uk).

