

February 2013 Bulletin Board

The National Governors' Association is an independent charity representing state school governors from both 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, the changes and developments in governance, and active government consultations. 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 G.

If you have any comments on this bulletin or suggestions for future editions, please contact laura.owen@nga.org.uk.

Contents:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| A. Cover story | E. DfE consultations |
| B. Education News | F. NGA Partners |
| C. NGA News | G. NGA membership benefits |
| D. Dates for Your Diary | |

A. How well are secondary schools doing?

Last week, the Department for Education (DfE) published the latest performance tables for secondary schools. The data show that at key stage 4, 59.4% of pupils in both maintained and independent schools reached the government's benchmark of five GCSEs graded A* to C, including English and maths - up from 58.2% in 2011. However, the number of schools failing to reach the government floor standard for pupils obtaining five A*-C GCSEs has doubled to 215. The threshold for the standard has been increased from 35% to 40% since last year, with the Secretary of State for Education (Michael Gove) set to increase it to 50% within two years. NGA members can read more on this subject in last week's newsletter.

Ofsted followed the publishing of the data with an announcement that it is ordering a report into how state schools teach their most able students. Sir Michael Wilshaw, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, said that the urgent 'rapid response survey', due to be published in the spring, will look at: existing inspection data on gifted and talented provision, statistics on progress and an in depth investigation of a representative sample of 50 state schools.

Sir Michael said too much emphasis has been placed on gaining C grades with pupils being entered for exams too early and then not being stretched to reach their potential if they achieve a C grade. He voiced concern about the fact that data published by The Sutton Trust last year showed that the top five schools (four independent, one state maintained) sent more pupils to Oxbridge in 2007-9 than 2000 state schools combined. Sir Michael would also like to see the performance tables reformed so that there is a sharper focus on progress to give a more sophisticated view of the school's performance.

[DfE performance data](#)

[Sunday Telegraph](#)

B. Education News

1. Changes to School Teachers' Pay

In January, the Department for Education accepted the recommendations made by the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) in relation to teachers' and headteachers' pay (as reported in the January Bulletin Board). The recommendations included changing the basis of increments from length of service to excellence and performance improvement.

The DfE is now discussing with the original consultees about how best to implement the new arrangements.

Members can read more detail about the changes in the March edition of *Governing Matters*.

2. Further concerns over GCSE reform

The Education Select Committee has voiced concerns over the government's proposals for GCSE reform in a report released this week. The Committee agreed that changes to the GCSE system are needed, but warned that the government is "trying to do too much too fast". A letter, signed by 100 groups (including the NGA) and individuals, had been sent to the Prime Minister urging him to reconsider the pace of GCSE reforms. In the letter, signatories acknowledge the need to reform GCSEs, but say that decisions are being made too quickly. They also raise concerns over the exclusion of creative and vocational subjects and sport in the proposed English Baccalaureate Certificates, saying that the EBCs do not offer the balanced curriculum students need. The campaigners ask for an extended consultation period, during which the views of stakeholders including parents, students, governors, businesses, teachers and head teachers should be sought.

The Committee asked the government for evidence that GCSEs are so unfit for purpose they must be replaced and warned of the potential consequences for the 40 per cent of pupils who don't achieve 5 A*-C GCSEs including English and maths. The Committee found no evidence that the proposed changes will help to tackle under-achievement or narrow the attainment gap any more effectively than GCSEs. Furthermore, it questioned the value of the proposed "Statement of Achievement" for lower attaining pupils and warned that it may become a "badge of failure". The Committee agreed that the administration of exams must be changed, but are concerned about the long-term impact of franchising subjects to single exam boards. They ask the government to seriously consider the potential consequences of a franchised system and the complexities of the tendering process.

The Committee has major concerns about the proposed timetable for reform, as introducing the number of changes the government proposes could seriously jeopardise the quality of new qualifications and even destabilise the wider exam system. It urges the government to "act in the best interests of young people... pay the most serious attention to the concerns expressed by experts in the field and to slow down the pace of reform."

The report mirrors the views of many stakeholders, including the NGA.

3. A-Level reforms confirmed

The Secretary of State for Education has confirmed changes to A-Levels in England. In a letter to Ofqual Mr Gove says that “current A-Levels do not always provide the solid foundation that students need to prepare them for degree level study” and has directed Ofsted to remove the modular structure of A-Levels and reinstate a single assessment at the end of year 13. He believes this will allow students to develop a deeper understanding of each subject. In addition, AS Levels will become a standalone qualification, no longer counting towards an A Level. A group of academics from Russell Group universities will offer advice to Ofqual regarding the content of the new qualifications.

The proposed changes have already met with controversy. Brian Lightman, General Secretary of ASCL, said: “This is a classic case of 'fixing' something that isn't broken.”

Members can read more online: http://www.nga.org.uk/Members-Area/NGA-Newsletters/January-August2013/Newsletter-25-01-2013.aspx#a_level

If you have any comments on the proposed A Level reforms please email [Ellie: Eleanor.howarth@nga.org.uk](mailto:Ellie.Eleanor.howarth@nga.org.uk).

4. Unleashing Greatness – Academies Commission Report

On Thursday 11 January, The Academies Commission issued its report *Unleashing greatness – getting the best from an academised system*. The Commission was jointly set up by the RSA and Pearson Think Tank; its remit was to consider the current impact of the academies programme and what might be the implications for the education system in which the majority of schools become academies.

The report considers a range of issues including academy governance, freedoms and school admissions. It states: “The role of governors is more important than ever in an academised system, and their scrutiny and challenge should ensure effective accountability.”

The Commission highlighted four risks in relation to governors and governance (lack of understanding of their role as company directors and in school improvement, potential lack of governors with sufficient expertise and time and lack of engagement with stakeholders and the local community). It then goes on to consider these issues and makes eight recommendations about governance. Many of the recommendations relate to training and development of governors, but there are specific recommendations about offering incentives to employers to encourage their staff to become governors and give them time off and the following recommendation about chairs:

“Schools should advertise the appointment of new chairs as part of an open recruitment approach and involve at least one independent person in the appointment process. There should be mandatory training on appointment.”

The NGA welcomes the Commission’s recognition of the importance of governance and was supportive of many of its recommendations in our recent evidence to the Education Select Committee. We suggested that in the majority of cases chairs should be elected from within the governing body, as knowing the school is an important element of being a good chair,

but consideration could be given to allowing chairs to be appointed from outside the governing body in situations where it is impossible to elect a skilled chair from amongst the serving governors.

We would welcome views on the recommendations and in particular the suggestion that the position of the chair should be advertised. If you would like to comment please email our Policy Manager [Gillian Allcroft](#).

The full report can be found here – <http://www.academiescommission.org/?p=449>

C. NGA News

1. NGA Poll

The results of the last poll are in:

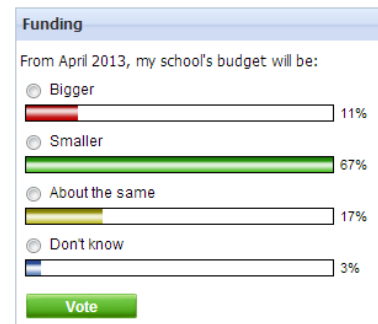
From April 2013, my school's budget will be:

67% Smaller (199)

17% About the same (50)

11% Bigger (34)

3% Don't know (11)



Following the release of the report by the Academies Commission, please take the time to vote in our new poll:

Do you think chairs should be elected from within the governing body, or should governing bodies be allowed to advertise the position and appoint an external candidate?

2. Register for a scholarship for chairs training this month

The National College is providing scholarships for some participants to make the chair's development programme as accessible as possible. There are two types:

- A full scholarship of £350 for participants from small schools (100 pupils or less according to the most recent Pupil Level Annual School Census)
- A part scholarship of £175 for participants from schools that are 'satisfactory' or 'require improvement.'

There is a limited fund, so apply early to make sure you receive one of these scholarships. It is not yet known whether they will be available for those who apply next financial year; if you meet the eligibility criteria register now to ensure you get yours. You have to apply via your training provider. To find out who that is, visit the National College website or click <http://www.nga.org.uk/Resources/Chairs-of-Governors/National-College%E2%80%99s-Chairs-of-Governors%E2%80%99-Leadership.aspx>. If you are registering to undertake the programme with the Leading Governance partnership led by NGA and Eastern Leadership Centre, to make absolutely sure we have funds for you, please register by 15 February: see www.leadinggovernance.org.

3. Sponsored academies Q&A

The NGA has produced a Q&A on sponsored academies. The document is the next in a series of Q&A's, which has included conversion to academy status and changing the constitution of your governing body.

Members can access the Q&A online: <http://www.nga.org.uk/Members-Area/Guidance/The-Governing-Body.aspx?page=1>

D. Dates for Your Diary

If you would like us to advertise your local event, please email Laura Owen (laura.owen@nga.org.uk).

1. NGA Regional Conferences

The next NGA regional conferences will be in the North East region, and the South West. These very popular events are **free** and open to **non-members**. The conferences theme is '**Governance in a Changing Environment**' and the keynote speakers will be from the Ofsted regional office. Registration is now open online: <http://www.nga.org.uk/Events.aspx>.

North East: Saturday 2 March 2013 (Durham)

Agenda is now available online.

Keynote speakers: Tom Grieveson, Senior HMI Ofsted
 Sam Ellis, ASCL Funding Specialist; Changes to school funding
 Les Walton, Northern Education Trust: Effective Governance

South West: Saturday 9 March 2013 (Exeter)

Keynote speakers: Tom Winskill, HMI Ofsted

2. NGA Regional Meetings

The NGA regional meetings are free for members to attend. Members will have the opportunity to discuss topical issues and there will be an update on the NGA's work from the NGA's chief executive or policy manager. Booking is essential and must be made through the website. The agenda and details of the venue will be sent to members once they have booked a place.

Region	Date	Time	Location
North West	Monday 25 February	18.30 – 21.30	Preston
Yorkshire and the Humber	Tuesday 26 February	19.00 – 21.00	Wakefield
South East	Tuesday 5 March	13.30 – 16.00	London
London	Tuesday 5 March	18.00 – 20.00	London
West Midlands	Wednesday 13 March	18.30 – 20.30	Birmingham
East Midlands	Tuesday 19 March	11.00 – 15.00	Leicester
East of England	Saturday 27 April	10.00 – 12.30	Cambridge

3. NGA Policy Conference

The date of the NGA summer Policy Conference has been confirmed as the 6 July. Bookings for the event, which will take place in London, are now open, and must be made online at the address below. The new Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Lord Nash, will be attending and giving the keynote address. Governing Body Standard members are entitled to one free place, corporate members are entitled to two free places, and GOLD members and local associations are entitled to three free places. Individuals and any places over your membership allocation can be bought at a cost of £60 (including VAT).

<http://www.nga.org.uk/Events/Policy-Conference-2013.aspx>

4. Special Schools Conference – save the date

The NGA is holding a conference for the governors of special schools. The event will take place on 18 May 2013, and is open to **non-members**. More information will follow in the next bulletin board.

5. National College Workshops:

Strong governance for good schools: Heads and chairs working together

National College and NGA are working together on nine regional workshops for chairs and heads/principals which will examine how headteachers and chairs can work most effectively together to improve governance and school performance. It begins with a video message from Sir Michael Wilshaw, HMCI.

Register now to attend one of the workshops which are scheduled from 15.00 to 20.00. You can choose whichever date and venue suits you. Not only are these free, but the National College will pay for your travel expenses.

Region	Date	Time	Venue
North West	Past		
East Midlands	05-Feb	15.00 – 20.00	Nottingham
South East	11-Feb	15.00 – 20.00	Reading
Yorkshire and Humber	27-Feb	15.00 – 20.00	York
North East	04-Mar	15.00 – 20.00	Newcastle
London	06-Mar	15.00 – 20.00	St Pancras, London
South West	11-Mar	15.00 – 20.00	Exeter
West Midlands	20-Mar	15.00 – 20.00	Birmingham City Centre
Eastern	25-Mar	15.00 – 20.00	Stansted

Registration: <https://registration.livgroup.co.uk/ncslgov2013/>

6. DSLP Governors Conference: Achieving Strong School Governance

The Derby Schools Learning Partnership is holding a conference for governors on Wednesday 6 March on 'Achieving Strong School Governance.' Maggie Farrar (Interim Chief Executive of National College) has been confirmed as the key note speaker. There is also an

opportunity to attend a workshop, including one on funding by the NGA Policy Manager Gillian Allcroft.

You can find out more information and download a booking form at <http://www.nga.org.uk/Members-Area/Regions/East-Midlands/DSLIP-Governors-Conference.aspx>. Please send forms to Ruth Darby: rdarby@saintben.derby.sch.uk.

E. DfE & Ofqual Consultations since the last bulletin (closing dates are for DfE)

There are no new relevant consultations this month.

NGA is always interested in hearing governors' views on these and other topics; please email any comments, or copies of any submission you make to NGA's policy manager: Gillian.allcroft@nga.org.uk.

F. NGA Partners

1. Governors' E-Learning

We are delighted to announce that GEL has decided to continue its sponsorship of the NGA. GEL (Governors' E-Learning) produce online training modules for governors in association with governor service managers and expert governance consultants. Its parent company, Eastern Leadership Centre, is a partner of the NGA in delivering the National College's Chair's Development Programme. You can find out more about getting involved in this programme on our website at <http://www.nga.org.uk/Resources/Chairs-of-Governors/National-College%E2%80%99s-Chairs-of-Governors%E2%80%99-Leadership.aspx>



2. Towergate

We are also very pleased to announce that Towergate Education Insurance Division has also continued its sponsorship. Towergate has been an NGA sponsor since November 2010 and is an approved partner of the National Governors' Association. Towergate Education has worked with schools since 1991 offering one of the widest staff absence policies with cover for pre-existing illnesses, pre-planned surgery and stress (full 190 days) all included as standard. Backed by reputable insurer, Allianz Insurance Plc, the policy is written in plain-English with a non-intrusive claims procedure.

More information about Towergate Education can be found at <http://www.towergateeducation.co.uk/>.

G. 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.

GOLD governing body membership: £250 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 service**.

Standard governing body membership: £70 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.

You can join the NGA online through our website (www.nga.org.uk), or you can call the office 0121 237 3780 to find out more information and request a membership form.

Governing Matters

January's edition of *Governing Matters* includes articles on:

- Performance management
- The Ofsted framework
- Maximising the pupil premium
- Sponsored academy conversion

