

April 2012 Bulletin Board

The National Governors' Association is an independent charity representing state school governors – the largest volunteer group in England – 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 local schools up to-date. It is intended to update governing bodies 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 H.

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

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A. Cover Story

Stronger Governance Systems

In 2009, the then Department for Children, Schools and Families produced a programme designed to help governors improve the quality and impact of the contributions they make, so that they can support and challenge schools effectively. The main focus of the programme is school improvement, and it contains practical advice for strengthening the strategic role over the operational one. It was produced to work alongside guidance from the NGA and local authorities.

There are four elements:

- roles, responsibilities and accountabilities
- school improvement planning
- key indicators of how the school is doing
- school self-evaluation – the role of governors

Even though Ofsted no longer provides a central self-evaluation form (SEF), schools still need to carry out self-evaluation. The document takes you through how to evaluate the governing body's own effectiveness, as well as the quality of the process.

The programme is free, and available on the NGA website:

<http://www.nga.org.uk/Resources/Useful-Documents/Stronger-Governance-Systems.aspx>

B. Education News

1. Funding reform delayed and another funding consultation

Last week, the Department for Education (DfE) issued its latest statement on school funding. Disappointingly, there will now be no change to the overall method of funding distribution (i.e. the way in which DfE delivers funding to local authorities) until after the next election.

The NGA recognises that changes to the funding formula require careful thought, and that making something simpler will not necessarily make it fairer, but it has generally been acknowledged that the current system is not fit for purpose.

What the DfE has proposed is that local authorities will need to make changes to their formulae, reducing the number of factors (to ten) they can use, and stipulating what indicators can be used for deprivation funding (FSM or IDACI).

To read more about this and other stories in the news (including falling morale and statutory careers guidance), see our newsletter from 30 March. The NGA's full briefing on the latest funding paper will be available after the Easter holidays.

2. Homework guidelines relaxed

The Secretary of State for Education has scrapped the homework guidelines for schools. The guidelines were introduced in 1998, and set recommendations for the amount of homework that schools should set. It will now be for headteachers to decide how much homework pupils should be set. Further details can be found in the NGA newsletter of 9 March 2012, along with stories on the growth of academy chains, the review of pupil referral units, and raspberry pi.

3. Labour Party proposals for evidence-based policy

Stephen Twigg, the Shadow Secretary of State for Education, has announced his proposal to set up a new Office of Educational Improvement, which would require future education ministers to justify proposals with evidence to show that they will have a positive effect on school improvement. In announcing his initiative Stephen Twigg said that the Office would focus on four major areas:

- promoting high standards
- spreading best practice
- acting as a clearing house for research
- and aiming to improve England's position compared to other countries

The full text of Stephen Twigg's speech can be read at <http://www.progressonline.org.uk/2012/02/21/evidence-not-dogma-3/>

4. Summer School Funding for Secondary Schools

The Department for Education (DfE) has made £50m available for secondary schools to apply to run a summer school, which will be aimed at pupils who are registered as eligible for free school meals or pupils who have been in care for at least six months. If all the places were not filled, then these could be made available to other pupils who would benefit from the summer school.

Schools need to apply for the funding by the closing date of 30 April 2012.

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/premium/b00204241/ssprog>

5. Review of Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and Alternative Provision (AP)

Charlie Taylor, the Government's Expert Advisor on behaviour, has published his independent review into alternative provision. Mr Taylor, the headteacher at a special school in West London (currently seconded to the DfE), has carried out a review of behaviour units. The quality of service in AP and PRUs has been the source of concern for some time and was reported on by Ofsted in 2011.

This review makes 28 recommendations, including that:

- AP policy (both locally and nationally) should have an increased focus on assessing and identifying children's needs as early as possible to prevent permanent exclusion
- schools rather than local authorities should be responsible for commissioning alternative and PRU provision

Mr Taylor said "One of the things these children find difficult to deal with, and it's ironic because they have chaotic lives, is any sort of change. So less churn in the staff of pupil referral units, a bit more stability, is the key – specialists, and better trained specialists." Some of these teachers could go back into mainstream schools as experts in being able to handle problem behaviour. The Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, welcomed the review and accepted all the recommendations.

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/a00204776/taylor-review-of-alternative-provision>

C. NGA News

1. April Poll

A new poll is now on the NGA home page! Please vote:

'How has the number of parental complaints changed since last year?'

2. March Poll

Thank you to everyone who voted in the March poll on:

'What is the minimum number of governors the governing body needs to operate effectively?'

52%	11-14	(198)
29%	8 – 10	(112)
12%	7	(49)
5%	15+	(19)

3. Updated First Certificate for New Governors!

New governors need timely induction to understand their roles and responsibilities. NGA's *Welcome to Governance* induction pack provides this basic grounding. It is purchased by schools and local authorities across the country. The new edition has been completely re-designed to incorporate the Academies Act 2010 and the Education Act 2011, and covers academy governance as well as local authority maintained schools. In conjunction with our partner EduCare, we have revised and updated our 'First Certificate' online learning test to reflect the 2012-13 edition of *Welcome to Governance*.

The First Certificate is an online multiple-choice questionnaire to test a governor's understanding of *Welcome to Governance*. Six new governors each year can undertake the certification free of charge if the school is an NGA Gold member. Visit www.educare.co.uk.

D. Dates for your Diary

1. Chairs of Associations Conference, Nottingham, 27 – 28 April 2012

Invitations have been sent to chairs of local associations. If you are chair and have not received your copy, please email membership@nga.org.uk to update the membership details and confirm your place.

2. Best Practice Network and NGA Conference, London, Wednesday 9 May 2012

This event, supported by the NGA, is about standards and structures in primary school governance, and how they can be used to raise attainment. There will be workshops on:



- How can we further strengthen governance in primary schools?
- Satisfactory is not enough: appraising headteachers and teachers in the context of new standards
- The role of the National Lead Governor
- What makes a primary school exceptional
- The contribution of teaching schools in helping to raise standards in the primary phase

Schools minister, Lord Hill, and Schools Commissioner, Dame Elizabeth Sidwell, will be giving the key note addresses. Go to www.nga.org.uk/events.aspx for more details and to

download a flyer and draft agenda. Discounts are available for NGA members, and bulk registrations.

3. Yorkshire and Humberside Data Conference, Sheffield, Saturday 19 May 2012

This free event is open to anyone, not just NGA members. Please contact laura.owen@nga.org.uk for more information and a flyer for distribution, or visit www.nga.org.uk/events.aspx.

4. NGA Summer Conference and EGM, Thistle – Marble Arch, London, Saturday 16 June 2012

The NGA summer conference will be held in central London at the Thistle Marble Arch Hotel. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw will be giving the key note address. We will be holding workshops on curriculum, safeguarding, recruiting a headteacher, academy governance, effective clerking, and school financial management. You can download a booking form here. You must book by 25 May.

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

1. [New Statutory Guidance for the induction of newly qualified teachers \(NQTs\) in England](#)
Closing Date: Wednesday 25 April 2012
1. [Proposed Changes to allow Schools to more easily employ Industry Experts to work as Instructors in Schools](#)
Closing Date: Friday 18 May 2012
2. [Consultation on school funding reform: Next steps towards a fairer system](#)
Closing Date: Monday 21 May 2012
3. [Consultation on Draft Revised Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Services and Activities to Improve Young People's Wellbeing](#)
Closing Date: Friday 25 May 2012

To view the consultations, please go to <http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/index.cfm>.

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

F. NGA Partners

1. GEL and NGA joint membership

The NGA are working with sponsor GEL (Governors e-Learning) to provide joint membership. In becoming a member of both organisations, not only will school governors receive support, advice and information from the NGA, but they will be able to access online training modules to help develop the skills of the body, and also help their school improvement.

Visit www.elc-gel.org.uk for more information.

2. NGA and Modern Governor launch a new module on academies

NGA's Information Officer Philip Wood has developed a module with Modern Governor to introduce governors to the academy conversion process. Modern Governor provides online training for governors. The new academy module is due to be launched in April.

Visit www.moderngovernor.com for more information.

3. Modern Governor Survey

Modern Governor is running a survey on behalf of the DfE about how best to support schools to optimise their financial resources and support their teaching and learning objectives. To ensure it develops appropriate tools and resources, the DfE wants to get a better and wider understanding of how governors and governing bodies are currently involved in improving efficiency in their schools. The survey covers basic questions around efficient financial management and effective procurement. It will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. Please do take part.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/DfESurveyOfGovernors2012>

4. School Governors' One-Stop Shop (SGOSS)

The School Governors' One-Stop Shop is a DfE funded charity dedicated to recruiting and placing school governors. Its services are free to schools, LAs, volunteers and employers. If your school's governing body has vacancies, or is seeking a volunteer with particular skills, contact SGOSS on 0207 354 9805.

Visit the SGOSS website at: www.sgoss.org.uk

G. NGA Membership Benefits

Make sure your association is receiving all its benefits. Members of the executive committees of local associations are entitled to receive a copy of the NGA magazine, *Governing Matters*, sent to their home address, to have access to the members' only section of the NGA website, and to have the e-newsletter sent direct to their email address. 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.

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.

Standard governing body membership: £70 entitles you to five free copies of the magazine, discounts on publications, and a free place at members' events.

Gold governing body membership: £250 ensures in addition that every governor receives the bi-monthly magazine *Governing Matters*; the school gets a free pack of guides, additional event places, and is entitled to advice from the NGA, including **access to our legal service**.