

Termly Bulletin: Spring 2016/17

The focus of this bulletin is updates on developments in school governance in England. It has been sent directly to all the NGA corporate and local association members, and can be forwarded to anyone else.

The National Governors' Association (NGA) aims to represent all school governors and trustees in England; there are over 300,000 governors/trustees, one of the largest volunteer groups in the UK. We are an independent charity that aims to support and promote good governance in our schools; we do this through lobbying, via a range of contacts with ministers, policy makers and education organisations. We also run national conferences, and a number of regional events. This is a small example of the work we produce for our members.

If you are interested in finding out more, see www.nga.org.uk, call 0121 237 3780, or email membership@nga.org.uk.

Brand new NGA Skills Audit available now

NGA has published a brand new 2017 version of its much used skills audit, a tool designed to help governing boards review what skills are already available to them, what gaps they are in the knowledge and experience of the board and pinpoint areas for training or targeted recruitment.

In the 2016 NGA/TES survey, 83% of the 5,000 respondents said their governing board uses a skills audit, with 64% using it to identify training needs and 54% using it for recruitment. The audit can be used to help identify any knowledge, experience, skills and behaviours your governing board still needs to deliver their functions effectively.

How the NGA model has changed and why

In January 2017, the Department for Education (DfE) released a new Competency Framework for Governance, structured around the DfE's newly identified "six features of Effective Governance". The governance handbook 2017 states that "Boards should carry out regular audits of the skills they possess in the light of the skills and competences they need, taking account of the department's Competency framework for governance".

The Competency framework has been written to cover all possible bases in school governance, from boards governing small standalone primary schools to the trust boards of large MATs overseeing the performance of multiple schools. NGA firmly feel that governing boards are best placed themselves to individually assess which areas outlined in the framework are most important for them, and so while the new skills audit is structured around the DfE's six features of effective governance, it doesn't attempt to replicate all 200-plus competencies, knowledge, skills and behaviours included. Instead it combines the core aspects of the framework with the priceless experience and feedback of our members to inform the skills, experiences and knowledge included.

To take account of the significant differences of governing as a MAT trustee compared to governing in a single school, NGA has developed two separate models; one for governors, trustees and academy committee members of single schools and a separate version for trustees of multi-academy trust.

Find out more and download the skills audits at www.nga.org.uk/skillsaudit



Funding the Future: supporting England's schools

Don't miss the opportunity to respond to the current consultation: closes on 22 March.

Voices from across the education system are expressing increasing concern about the financial sustainability of schools and their ability to offer what should be core provision to pupils.

The NGA has been among those calling for a change in the way school funding was distributed and welcomed the government's commitment to putting in place a new national funding formula (NFF). The Department for Education (DfE) announced the details of the proposals in December 2016 and [the consultation on this](#) remains open until 22 March 2017.

Whatever the outcome of that consultation, it is becoming increasingly clear that the best schools can expect is a fairer share of not enough. Governing boards are telling us that their schools are already experiencing funding pressures and anticipating these becoming more acute in the next two academic years. In a survey of 5,000 governors and trustees conducted in the 2015/16 summer term:

- 26% reported having made redundancies in the previous 12 months, including 55% of those governing secondary schools
- 60% said financial constraints would mean they need to reduce spending on staff over the next two years, rising to 77% for secondary schools
- 33% of governors and trustees report that their school's offer to pupils has already been reduced as a result of funding constraints – again, this included 60% of secondary school governors and trustees

The National Audit Office have calculated that schools will need to make savings of £3 billion between 2014/15 and 2019/20 because, while the schools budget has been protected in real-terms at system level, rising numbers of pupils during the same period means that there will be an 8% real-terms reduction in per-pupil funding for mainstream schools between 2014-15 and 2019-20.

In its 2015 manifesto, the Conservative party assured the public that “the amount of money following your child into school will be protected”. Giving evidence to the Public Accounts Committee on 23 January, the permanent secretary to the DfE, Jonathan Slater, acknowledged that “the Government have protected the funding of schools overall in real terms, but not per pupil”. To meet the manifesto commitment, and avoid risking the education of a generation of young people, the government should commit to increasing the basic funding rate for each pupil.

Take action

NGA has been encouraging governing boards across the country to make their voices heard about their financial situation by lobbying their MPs. Find out more and keep up to date at the Funding the Future campaign page: www.nga.org.uk/fundingthefuture:

- Step one: [download our template letter to MPs](#) and amend it to suit you and your circumstances
- Step two: go to www.writetothem.com find your MP and send them the letter
- Step three: write to parents and guardians - [download our template letter](#)
- Step four: [let us know](#) that you've done it

We are also building up a bank of case-studies to make our argument more compelling to those who may not understand the extent of the problem or the difficult decisions governors and trustees are facing. If you have a story, please get in touch: fay.holland@nga.org.uk. Although no additional funds were announced in this month's budget, we will continue making representations on the amount of funding up to the autumn budget, and if necessary beyond



New e-learning platform for governors, trustees and clerks

The National Governors' Association (NGA) has announced plans for a new online training platform starting in the summer term of 2017.



NGA Learning Link' will provide users with access to over fifty modules curated by NGA's expert team of policy and information specialists. Modules will be comprehensive and cover a range of governance-related topics including: strategy, team work, assessment, staffing, financial oversight, elements of effective governance, compliance, and collaboration to name a few.

There will also be eight induction modules for governors and trustees. These will be free to all governors and trustees placed with [Inspiring Governance](#), the online governance recruitment service.

To deliver this NGA will be working with one of the UK's top e-learning companies, Virtual College. Heidi Copland, Business Development Director at the National Governors' Association, said:

"It's essential for governing boards to commit themselves to ongoing training and development. New governors and trustees should be in no doubt about what their powers and responsibilities are and how to carry them out effectively. We think training should be high quality, low cost, tailored to the individual and accessible 24/7. Virtual College shares this vision and we are very excited to be working with them to develop NGA Learning Link."

The way governors and trustees want to learn is changing. It can be difficult to find time to attend training in person and courses are getting more and more expensive. There is also a strong desire for training to be tailored to the skill set and learning requirements of individuals.

NGA Learning Link will support users to learn in a way that suits them - remotely, in the evenings and at the weekend, with 24/7 support. It will be inexpensive and particularly benefit those new to governance by giving them a head start; immediate access to essential information, guidance and further reading during their first months as a governor or trustee. NGA Learning Link will also help those in rural and remote parts of the country where it is often difficult or inconvenient to attend face to face training.

If you are interested in buying NGA Learning Link for your governing board or a group of schools, please contact Bill Kiely today at: bill.kiely@nga.org.uk or call us on: 0121 237 3780.

Current users of GEL will be migrated across to NGA Learning Link once it is live.



Dates for your diary

Every spring and autumn, NGA host events for governors and trustees in each of our nine regions.

Regional conferences:

Topics of discussion for spring 2017 will include: financial efficiency, succession planning for governing boards, and school improvement and the arts.

- East Midlands, Saturday 18 March, 10am-3pm, Leicester
Keynote speech from Emma Knights, Chief Executive of NGA
- North East, Saturday 25 March, 10am-3pm, Newcastle
Keynote speech from Janet Renou, Regional Schools Commissioner for the North of England
- South West, Saturday 1 April, 10.30am-3.30pm, Taunton
Keynote speech from Rebecca Clark, Regional Schools Commissioner for the South West

Regional meetings are held in each of the other regions. These are a valuable opportunity to discuss the latest developments in policy and practice and network with other governing boards in your region. Find out the dates and locations in your region [here](#).

Community MATs network

Friday 23 June 2017, London

Following successful events in Manchester and Birmingham, the NGA Community MATs network is coming to London. On the eve of the Summer Conference, this is a fantastic opportunity for trustees and clerks of multi academy trusts (MATs) to share their practice and experiences.

Find out more about the [Community MATs network](#) and [find us on LinkedIn](#).

Summer Conference

Saturday 24 June 2017, London

We are delighted to announce Sir Kevan Collins, Chief Executive of the Education Endowment Foundation as our keynote speaker. Throughout the day, our range of expert speakers and varied workshops will provide practical advice and opportunities to discuss challenges, network, and share best practice.

Annual Conference and AGM

Saturday 18 November 2017, Birmingham

Details of speakers to be confirmed.

NGA members can claim a set number of free places at our events as a benefit of membership: visit www.nga.org.uk/events

The Academies Show, London

Wednesday 26 April 2017

The Academies Show is a chance to explore the role of academies in the education landscape. It is free to attend and aims to provide visitors with a clear understanding of the process of converting to an academy, learn about managing a successful academy, and be informed about the future of education policy.

NGA is pleased to once again be a supporter and contributor to the Show. NGA staff will lead seminars on governance structures and recruitment of governors and trustees. Find out more about the programme [here](#). To register for your free entry ticket please visit www.academiesshow.london



Want an NGA speaker at your event?

As a benefit of local association membership, NGA offers access to speakers for local association meetings and events, completely free of charge. Other organisations are charged a speaking fee on top of expenses. We have been delighted to meet so many governors and trustees at events around the country this year: if you are interested in arranging an NGA speaker for a future event, get in touch by emailing shelby.roberts@nga.org.uk.

Looking for new governors?

Inspiring Governance is the free online matchmaking service, connecting prospective governors and trustees with schools and colleges nationwide. Governing boards seeking new volunteers can view all the volunteers in their area or specify the skills they're looking for, connect with volunteers directly and begin the process of recruiting.



Register your governing board vacancies today at:

www.inspiringgovernance.org

School exclusion guidance: open consultation

The Department for Education (DfE) is currently consulting on its proposed revisions to the statutory guidance on the exclusion of pupils. The amendments will centre on both statutory and non-statutory information. It is hoped that the proposed revisions will bring clarification to the rules that apply to exclusions and process of review.

The DfE is currently seeking views on the planned changes to the statutory guidance via an online survey. If you would like to offer your views, the survey can be found here: <https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-absence-and-exclusions-team/statutory-exclusion-guidance/>

For more information on the role of governing boards in school exclusions, visit the NGA Guidance Centre and download the [four stage guide for governing boards](#).

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 (£79 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 a weekly e-newsletter tailored for governance every Friday in term-time. GOLD members have access to our GOLDline Advice Service and receive free guides.

Full details of membership benefits 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