

## Termly Bulletin: Summer 2015/16

### Strong Governance, Strong Schools

Welcome to the third and final NGA termly bulletin of this academic year.

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

The National Governors' Association (NGA) is the national membership charity for governing boards of local authority maintained schools and academies across England. We aim to support governors and trustees in their vital role of leading school improvement, and taking your views to the government to lobby for changes. 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](http://www.nga.org.uk), call 0121 237 3780, or email [membership@nga.org.uk](mailto:membership@nga.org.uk).

### Keep Parents Governing



NGA welcomed the announcement made on 6 May that the government has listened to the opinions of those in the sector and decided not to legislate for all schools to be converted to academies. There is, however, another proposal on which we are calling for another change of heart: the removal of the requirement for reserved places for parents on the governing boards of academies.

Parents of pupils bring an important perspective to the governance of a school that others are unlikely to bring, and elections provide a device for ensuring that those with different views are able to join boards. While skills are a crucial part of the make-up of any board, having a skilled board is not incompatible with recruiting a small number of board members from certain stakeholder groups.

NGA, with Parent Councils UK and PTA-UK, urges you to lobby your MP; see our [template letter and tweets](#). We hope that the government will listen to the voice of governors, trustees and parents and drop its proposal.

**Emma Knights, Chief Executive, National Governors' Association:** "The government has simply got this one wrong. But we hope that Nicky Morgan and her Department can yet be persuaded by the arguments that we and many others are putting across in defence of elected parents on

governing boards. You can help by lobbying your MP and getting them to back our campaign to Keep Parents Governing.”

**Fiona Carnie, Director, Parent Councils UK:** "It is essential that the voice of parents is heard loud and clear in school decision making to ensure that schools are best able to meet the needs of their students. Parent governors have a crucial role to play and must be retained."

**Emma Williams, Executive Director, PTA UK:** “There has been a strong reaction from parents against the prospect of Governing Boards no longer being required to include Parent Governors. 93% of mums and dads have told us that schools need Parent Governors and that the role of Parent Governor makes them feel that they are important to the school and included in decisions on their child’s education.”

[Template letter and tweets to send to your MP](#)

[Parent governors – why the government has got this wrong](#)

[Letter from NGA Chief Executive Emma Knights to Secretary of State Nicky Morgan](#)

[Guardian coverage: “Without parent governors, schools face an uphill battle to engage families”](#)

## Funding – is your school in the red?

Talk of school funding in recent months has been focused on the national funding formula, about which the Department for Education (DfE) is carrying out a two stage consultation. Those of you who have been involved in schools and governance for some time will be well aware of how welcome and long awaited funding reform is. While the DfE’s aim is to start the transition to the new formula from April 2017, it will be several years before the process is complete.

Meanwhile, governing boards are reporting significant pressures on their current budgets, with increasing cost pressures coming from changes to national insurance and pensions contributions and, more recently, the living wage. Added to this, the recently updated Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), which many local authorities use as a factor in their local formulas, adversely affected a number of schools budgets. IDACI is only updated every five years and since the last dataset was published there has been a significant shift, which has caused some schools to experience multiple tens of thousands in funding change. As with any change, this is particularly difficult to manage in short timescales.

NGA forms part of the School and Academy Funding Group, the DfE stakeholder advisory group on funding policy at whose regular meetings the DfE tests out ideas. Our members identify funding as a vital issue, and we are always grateful to hear of governors’ experiences which can then inform our lobbying. If your school has been affected by any of these factors, do send your examples to [gillian.allcroft@nga.org.uk](mailto:gillian.allcroft@nga.org.uk).

### *Further reading:*

NGA’s responses to consultations on the [Schools national funding formula](#) and [High needs funding reform](#). These consultations focused on the principles of funding reform, the building blocks used to construct the new formula, and the factors to be included. A further consultation on the weighting of these factors, setting out full illustrations of the impacts of the funding formulae across schools and local authorities, will follow.



The NGA has once again joined forces with Times Education Supplement (TES) to survey the nation's governors and trustees. Over 5,800 governors and trustees told us what they think last year, and this year we're hoping to hear from even more of you.

The survey is open to all governors and trustees in England, including headteachers. It aims to assess the impact of government policies on schools and academies, as well as getting a picture of governance practice across the country.

Findings from the survey are invaluable to NGA's work lobbying the government on key governance issues. They're also used to inform our other work and guidance to support governing boards across the country.

Some examples of how we used last year's survey data to lobby the government include:

- Quoting data about headteacher and teacher recruitment in [our evidence](#) to the Education Select Committee's inquiry into teacher supply.
- Quoting data about governing board size, mandatory induction training, skills audits, and governor recruitment in [our response](#) to the Department for Education's paper on the constitutions of maintained school governing bodies.
- Quoting data about headteacher recruitment, skills audits, and paying governors and trustees in [our response](#) to Ofsted's call for evidence on governance.

You don't have to be a member of the NGA to take the survey, so please do encourage your governing colleagues to take part. Results will be reported in TES and the September/October edition of NGA's magazine, [Governing Matters](#).

Take the survey here: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/NGATES-2016> and help spread the word on [Twitter](#).

### Local Governors' Associations – share your views!

Many thanks to the local associations who have already responded to our survey of local governors' associations. Our aim is to find out how things have changed for associations since our last survey two years ago, whether NGA support is meeting their needs, and what the key issues are moving forward.

If you are the chair of an association which has not yet taken part, you can do so until **Monday 16 May** by following this link: [NGA Survey of Local Associations 2016](#).

The results of the survey will be discussed at a workshop for chairs of local associations at our Summer Conference on Saturday 18 June in Birmingham City Centre. To book a place, visit [www.nga.org.uk/events](http://www.nga.org.uk/events).

## Governance structures: who does what in multi academy trusts?

As the proportion of schools which are part of multi academy trusts (MATs) continues to rise, some of the most frequently asked questions at events and to our advice team centre around a single issue: what can trust boards do, what can be done at a local governance level, and what's the relationship between the two?

These are, of course, crucial questions and ones that many governing boards give too little thought to in the process of joining or forming a trust. In MATs, boards of trustees are accountable in law for all major decisions about their academies but many of these can and should be delegated, including to the CEO and local governing committees. It is now a requirement for multi academy trusts to publish their schemes of delegation – the document setting out lines of responsibility and accountability – on their websites, and these are one of the first documents that Ofsted inspectors will look for prior to visiting a school.

There is not just one correct way of doing things and the governance structure of a trust may evolve or adjust over time as experience is built about what works well. The size of the MAT (both the number of schools and number of pupils), senior staffing structure, and geographical spread of schools may all have an impact on the choice of governance structure. Clarity is, however, essential.

To help governors set up strong, effective structures, NGA has recently published [four model schemes of delegation](#). These will be kept under review and updates made – if you have any feedback, contact our Head of Information Sam Henson: [sam.henson@nga.org.uk](mailto:sam.henson@nga.org.uk). We also offer [guidance](#) and [consultancy](#) on MAT governance structures.

## Federation First

Although MATs are being promoted as the preferred model for groups of schools by the DfE, they are not the only option available. In recognition of this, we launched our Federation First campaign in early March.

A federation is a number of maintained schools which have come together under one governing body. A 2011 Ofsted publication identified the three main reasons for forming federations as: stronger schools supporting weaker schools; small schools banding together to increase capacity and protect education provision; and federation across phases to strengthen provision across the education community.

Another advantage is that federations are much easier to set up than MATs, allowing governors and school leaders to focus on the process of coming together as a single organisation (including the winning of hearts and minds among the school community!). A federation can also serve as a 'stepping stone' to a MAT where the governing body decides this is the right path.



As well as raising awareness of this option, we are lobbying for further flexibilities for federation governing bodies, and providing advice and information to those considering it. We have a team of [Federation Champions](#) willing to share their own experience, including attending local authority or association events.

For more information, visit our [campaign page](#) or get in touch via [federations@nga.org.uk](mailto:federations@nga.org.uk).

## NGA relaunches Clerking Matters Campaign

[Clerking Matters](#) was set up in 2013 by NGA with partners to:

- Increase the understanding of the importance of the work of clerks and what can be expected of a well-trained clerk;
- Help governing boards find good clerks where there is difficulty in doing this;
- Help clerks know where continuing professional development can be found; and
- Encourage appropriate remuneration of clerks.



The campaign had some early successes, such as [Lord Nash announcing](#) the funding for the Clerks Development Programme. NGA also piloted the free ['Find us a Clerk' service](#) which enables governing boards to advertise their vacancies and for clerks to advertise their services – this is now a widely used resource.

The campaign was relaunched in 2016 and in February NGA hosted the first meeting of the Clerks' Advisory Group. This was attended by over 40 clerks and was an opportunity for them to tell us what issues were affecting them and let us know what we can do to help. Notes from the meeting are available [here](#).

The topic of clerks' pay was raised with concerns about both the rate of pay and the lack of consistency. In response to this, NGA is currently conducting a survey on the remuneration of clerks. It should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete and no individual responses or personal data from the survey will be shared with any third parties.

As we want to gather as many responses as possible, please forward the survey on to any clerks you know - they do not need to be members of NGA.

**Take the survey here:** <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ClerksPay>

## National College increases scholarships for clerks' and chairs' training programmes

NGA is pleased to be running the Chair of Governors' Leadership Development Programme and the National Clerk's Development Programme in various locations across the country.

These accredited programmes normally cost £399, but the National College has decided to increase the scholarship grants, meaning that the cost to schools is just £79.

There are also free workshops available to school clusters and groups of schools covering the topics of Financial Efficiency, Performance Related Pay and RAISEonline.

For more information, please contact Kitt Smith via [leading.governance@nga.org.uk](mailto:leading.governance@nga.org.uk).



## Dates for your diary

*Inspiring Leadership Conference* 15-17 June 2016, ICC, Birmingham

The Inspiring Leadership conference covers real depth and breadth, with themes including innovation, leadership, partnership, development and technology and much more, across keynote speakers, masterclasses and workshops. Book a free place at [www.inspiringleadership.org](http://www.inspiringleadership.org)

For those attending the conference, there will be an *Inspiring governance: School Leaders and Chairs of Boards* seminar on 17 June, bringing the focus on good governance and the relationship between school leaders and governing boards. The event is fully booked, but please email [bookings@nga.org.uk](mailto:bookings@nga.org.uk) with your name and school details to be added to the waiting list.

*10th Anniversary Dinner, 17 June, Birmingham*

Join us for our [10th anniversary dinner](#) on Friday 17 June, for an evening of food, drink, music and a few short speeches to help us celebrate with our brilliant members and partners.

*NGA's Summer Conference, 18 June, Birmingham*

The day after our anniversary dinner, our Summer Conference will look forwards to the next ten years (and beyond), examining the difference made by governors and trustees and establishing their role as strategic thinkers.

Morning sessions will include:

- Clerking matters
- Making the best use of teaching assistants
- Curriculum reform: GCSE & A level
- Valuing and retaining staff
- The role of Local Governor Associations in a changing world

Afternoon sessions will include:

- Special School Governance
- Outstanding careers education
- Assessment: Life without levels
- Keeping our heads
- Parental engagement and governance

For the overview of each workshop and to book your place visit [our events page](#).

*Festival of Education, 23 – 24 June 2016, Wellington College*

We are delighted to announce that NGA is a main partner for this year's The Telegraph Festival of Education, in association with Microsoft, and that we're able to offer members 30% off tickets.

Over two days, the Festival of Education, held at Wellington College, brings together the very best of education's most forward thinking advocates, practitioners of change, policy makers, educators, and students in one of the leading forums for thought leadership, CPD, and debate.

NGA will be helping to curate the NGA Governance Zone at the Festival, which promises to provide a comprehensive offering for schools, governors, and leaders. [Click here](#) for more information.

*Debating the Future of School Governance, 8 September 2016, University of East London*

This one day conference will provide crucial opportunities for school governors, parents, activists, teachers, civil servants, policy makers, academics and governor support workers to discuss some of the most pressing issues affecting school governance in England.

## What makes a high performing school?

A message from EES for Schools, one of NGA's sponsors.



Against a backdrop of a constantly changing education landscape and when school leaders are stretched for time, it is increasingly difficult to know what to focus on to become and remain a high-performing school. Support previously provided by local authorities and national bodies has diminished, budgets are being squeezed even further, the expectations of Ofsted, the curriculum, and floor standards have been raised and there is an expectation to develop school-led improvement and not to work in isolation.

Finding out how highly-effective schools do what they do, what approaches they use, and how they evidence their success has become a priority for EES for Schools. Working with school leaders and education experts, the company undertook a comprehensive review of the major national and international research into school effectiveness from the past 15 years.

For example, we all know that governance is extremely important, but the key question is what are the particular attributes and behaviours that make the biggest difference in highly effective schools? Within the six dimensions of learning, teaching, leadership, governance, people management and business management, the research established 25 characteristics that form the foundations of an effective school.

[\(Click here to see the characteristics.\)](#)

Based on this research, EES has developed an innovative concept that allows schools to collaborate and support each other to create a genuinely self-improving system. **School Effectiveness+** (SE+) combines an online self-evaluation tool with professional advice, high quality CPD, and high-impact, target-driven programmes of school-led improvement. You can find out more by visiting <http://www.eesforschools.org/SEplus>.

### 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 memberships will 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.

Full details of membership benefits can be found at [www.nga.org.uk/membership](http://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](mailto:membership@nga.org.uk).