

AGG

ASSOCIATION of
GREENWICH
GOVERNORS

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Voice

2016
New Year edition

2015 AGM

A very successful AGM was held at Cherry Orchard Primary School on 11th November. In his annual report, the Chairman promised to improve communication with regular copies of *The Voice* and updates to the website.

Following the AGM business of electing officers and committee, Tracy Russell and Julie Taylor addressed the meeting under the title of "Courageous Conversations". Tracy reminded us that we were an effective part of the leadership team and that we formed the biggest voluntary workforce in the UK, with 2,500 governors in Greenwich alone. She went on to outline some of the issues which would be exercising us in the coming years. These included changes in SEN, safeguarding, radicalisation, child sexual exploitation, academisation, partnerships and population increase. The growth in Greenwich would create the need for five new secondary schools in coming years. Julie concentrated on Ofsted inspections under the new framework and "life without levels". She reminded us of the importance of the school website. 94% of primaries and 100% of nurseries were "good or better", and the improvement was moving into secondary. A code of conduct for primary/secondary transfer was discussed.

An uplifting evening was concluded with a vote of thanks to our guest speakers and thanks to Cherry Orchard for their hospitality.

ARE WE FACING A TEACHER RECRUITMENT CRISIS?

A poll covering 250 heads in England found 46% had unfilled posts and 26% were using more supply teachers. More than 10% have had to increase the number of unqualified staff to fill the gaps in the past 3 years while 16% have had teachers covering subjects they do not specialise in, and 9% have hired from overseas. The hardest positions to fill include physics in London. Overall schools in the capital, South-East and West Midlands have most difficulty finding staff, the survey for TES Global found.

The DfE insisted: "The number and quality of teachers is at an all-time high."

ARE WE PAYING THE LONDON LIVING WAGE?

The AGG believes that all people employed in our borough should be paid a reasonable rate for the job. **Is your governing body committed to ensuring that all employees engaged to work in your school are paid the London Living Wage?**

STEEP

Recently members of the Executive Committee of the Association of Greenwich Governors attended a conference at Goldsmith's College organised by STEEP (South Thames Early Education Partnership) made up of Rachel Macmillan Nursery, Robert Owen Nursery, Pound Park Nursery, Abbey Wood Nursery, Clyde Early Childhood Centre and Chelwood Nursery School. Delegates heard that the nurseries support each other, work together to problem solve and seek solutions to the changes that have impacted and threatened the work they do with children and families. Delegates also heard presentations on the understanding of the factors impacting on children in today's society and the challenges they and their families face. Exploration of personal and professional ambition in education was another topic. Play was emphasised as being the highest form of research as was understanding the physicality in children's cognitive development. The conference was well attended by staff and governors of the STEEP nurseries and was well received. The next STEEP Conference will be in November 2016.

Janet Gillman

Executive Member

THE ASSOCIATION OF GREENWICH GOVERNORS

The Association of Greenwich Governors (AGG) was formed in 1995 to provide support to governors in all schools in the Royal Borough of Greenwich. All governing bodies in LA maintained schools are automatically members of the AGG and we hope that academies will also wish to subscribe. As a local governors' association we are members of the National Governors' Association (NGA). The NGA is the national membership organisation representing governors in LA maintained schools and academies in England. It is an independent charity that aims to support and promote good governance in our schools.

The AGG liaises closely with senior officers within the Royal Borough of Greenwich and we work together to plan Governors' Conferences and Directors Briefings. The Executive Committee meets at least once per term.

www.associationofgreenwichgovernors.org

The New Ofsted Framework

Executive Committee member Ann-Marie Cousins attended one of the courses arranged by Governor Services on the new Ofsted Framework. Below are some of the particular points of interest which she noted, and which may be of use to other governors who were not able to attend the course.

- Inspections are done by one or two inspectors with the senior leadership team, not to them.
- There is one overall judgement.
- No Greenwich school is rated as inadequate.
- There is one single inspection framework for all settings (nursery to f.e.)
- Culture and ambition—"Every child can do as well, if not better, than children at the 'best' schools." (Gillian Palmer)
- Inspection team will know issues particular to London (e.g. Impact on improving outcomes of white British boys? How is pupil premium being used to make a difference? Progress of looked after children?)
- They will look at reports on the school website (useful to have a named contact for reception) Parents views (also good if on website), data dashboard and last Ofsted report.
- What are we doing to ameliorate gang activity and its impact on behaviour?
- Make documents pithy and evaluative, not reams of data!
- Do pupils perform well, is the gap closing, what was done to achieve this and what capacity is there to continue improvements?
- What are the predictions and are we on track?
- The Prevent Agenda.

NEWS IN BRIEF.....

A North-South Divide?

Ofsted's Annual Report for 2014/5 found that primary schools continue to outperform secondary schools and secondary schools in the South are outperforming those in the North and Midlands. It states that governance is a key determinant of the success of a school, and although academies can create conditions conducive to improvement, structural reform alone is not sufficient as a route to improvement.

DfE to launch careers strategy in schools

The government has plans for a comprehensive careers strategy in schools which is due to be published early this year.

DfE invests in better mental health provision in schools

The Secretary of State has announced plans to establish closer cooperation between schools and the NHS's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). The initiative, which will test a 'named single point of contact', will operate in 27 pilot areas across the country and involve 255 schools.

I can't bear Ofsted so I'm going back to teach in Australia

The Guardian has a Saturday feature called 'The Secret Teacher'. On 14th November last year an Australian teacher wrote an article explaining why she was fleeing the UK to find work-life balance back home in Australia.

She wrote: Not long ago, I loved teaching. I was living in Australia, inspiring children's fascination with the world around them and stretching my own creativity. When I married my British husband, I moved to the UK. Now we're desperately waiting for his visa to come through so I can get back home to normal teaching. I knew moving abroad wasn't going to be easy, but I didn't expect to find the British education system so exhausting and pressurised. Since we moved here, every hour has been spent marking, stressing about data and planning lessons. I don't blame students or even other staff members for this. The responsibility lies at the door of one group: Ofsted (the "big O").

She went on to explain that there is no equivalent to Ofsted in Australia, that she felt under tremendous scrutiny and that any feedback was never constructive, but rather picking up on things that Ofsted might criticise, such as the fact that she hadn't done margins in books or clearly explained lesson objectives. With each inspection she felt judged, belittled and unconfident. She wrote: *I will leave this country with my creative spirit crushed, my ability to make lessons fun diminished and my confidence lost. I used to love teaching, but now each day is a struggle.*

This is only one teacher's personal experience. Perhaps she was unfortunate and found herself in a school in "special measures". I'm sure it was not a Greenwich school! But how widespread is this view, and is it reflected by others? Are we putting our teachers under too much stress?

What are your views? Why not share them with other Greenwich governors by writing to us at Voice?

R.M.

AGG

You can contact AGG by e-mail at voice@associationofgreenwichgovernors.org
Contact the Chair, Roy Moore on 020 8858 9829
or Secretary Ann Jefferson on 07703510391

Our committee is well represented by primary and special school governors, but not so well by secondary colleagues. If you have something to say, please write to us, particularly if you are a secondary school governor!

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