

Changes at the Top

David Grant will be a hard act to follow, he worked hard to know all our schools and was a constructive member of the School's Forum. David was a supporter of governors at a time when central government often seems to push us to the backwaters. If I am allowed some OFSTED speak he was a good 'critical friend'.

We welcome Angela, her solid educational background will be required over the coming year with the increased flow of new ideas from the DfES some of which are sound others seemingly based on wishful thinking rather than facts but all making work for us all. It is also good news that Angela has been an active governor so that she will recognise how the pressures on governors are increasing.

We wish Angela well in the new role

Jim Draper, Chair, Association of Greenwich Governors

A Letter from Angela Cornforth, New Cabinet Member for Lifelong Learning

It is a privilege to serve as Cabinet member for Lifelong Learning in our Borough. I look forward to the many challenges ahead and to working with colleagues and students in our schools and colleges.

Cllr David Grant has been an excellent Cabinet member and will be a very hard act to follow.

I have been involved in State Education for nearly 30 years, firstly as a Modern Foreign Languages teacher and more recently as an OFSTED team member. I co-edited the Quality in Education series published by the Latchmere Press. In addition during this time I have served as a school governor in 6 schools.

I look forward to contributing to our drive to raise standards of achievement in all our schools, colleges and other places of learning.

A Letter of Thanks from David Grant, Outgoing Cabinet Member for Lifelong Learning

David has written to us to ask us to 'pass on my thanks for their support over the past two years. I am quite sure that the progress we have made recently, which I very much hope will be sustained for the future, owes a lot to the work of so many governors across the borough. We all know this is one of the most thankless tasks now, but that does not make it any less important. I certainly intend to continue as a governor!'

He also says that he is 'delighted that my successor is to be Angela Cornforth, who has a strong background in and knowledge of education, as well as, in my opinion, the right personal qualities for the job.'

ARE YOUR NEW TEACHERS REGISTERED WITH THE GENERAL TEACHING COUNCIL (GTC)?

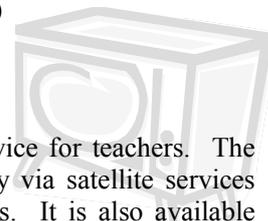
At a recent National Governors Council conference, Judy Moorhouse, Chair of the GTC, pointed out that membership of the GTC was compulsory for qualified teachers. This is useful for schools and governing bodies, as with one phone call to the GTC you can check that the teacher you want to appoint is qualified and has not been disbarred from teaching. (She reassured us that, of course, the vast majority of applicants are fine - but reminded us, with a few examples, that fraud happens).

She suggested that ads for qualified teachers should include the requirement that the teacher is GTC registered and that membership of the GTC should be a specific requirement within the Person Specification. She also suggested that job application forms should be amended so that teachers were required to provide both their DfES number and their GTC number. (We understand that the LEA is considering changing the job application forms to ensure that this happens.)

Last but not least by one of those quirks that this government for which this government is noted staff within the new Academies do not require to be GTC registered! (Governors at the conference were not impressed)

TEACHERS' TV

Teachers' TV is a new digital service for teachers. The service is available 24 hours a day via satellite services and via some digital cable services. It is also available from Freeview but only after midnight until early morning. While most programmes are directed at teachers there are programmes aimed at governors. To encourage teachers and others involved in education to use the service discounts are available for Freeview boxes, digital TVs and in some places cable access. The most common discount is from Comet who offer 10% off the cost of equipment to access Teachers' TV. This may only be a couple of pounds if you are purchasing a Freeview box but is certainly worthwhile if you are purchasing a digital TV with built in Freeview. All details can be found on the website www.get.teachers.tv/



Building schools for the future - the Greenwich pathfinder

Building Schools for the Future was set up as the Government's very ambitious programme for the rebuilding or refurbishment to modern standards of every secondary school in the country over the next 10 –15 years. Greenwich is one of the original pathfinder authorities in the vanguard of the programme's development and implementation. The programme is intended to use streamlined procurement methods via partnerships with the private sector to deliver this vast programme and secure good value for money.

In parallel with the Academies Programme, BSF is meant to transform the delivery of secondary education and support the drive for higher standards. During the general election, the intention was announced to extend the programme to include primary schools as well, and we currently await further details of how – and over what timescale - this will be done.

The Greenwich Pathfinder has some unique features which distinguish it from the national BSF programme; in particular, a two-stage procurement process which first identifies a Strategic Partner Organisation (SPO), to work with the Council on the designs, and then – through the SPO – the appointment, in competition, of the supply chain of contractors to build the schools and provide related services for each phase of projects. This retains an important competitive edge on costs throughout the programme and should deliver better value for money.

We are intending to appoint an SPO whose approach will be in sympathy with the aims of the Council, its schools and the other local stakeholders, and which would also be able to partner the Council on a range of other investment and regeneration programmes, adding value to what the Council would be able to achieve working alone.

Now, after a long period doing preparatory work for the first phase of the programme (and waiting for the resource allocations to be confirmed by the DfES) things are forging ahead.

We secured Government approval to our proposals in January, immediately moved into the procurement phase, and are now mid-way through the second stage of this. The initial response to the advert in the European Journal was very good, with 10 bids submitted. The field has since then been narrowed down to a long-list of potential partners, comprised as follows:

- **21st Century Education Ltd (a consortium of Mill Group & Mott MacDonald)**
- **Axiom Education (Greenwich) Ltd (a consortium of ABN Amro & Bryanston Square)**
- **Babcock and Brown Education Partnership**
- **Meridian Education Partnership (a consortium of EC Harris, NIBC Project Investments & Alfred McAlpine Project Investments)**
- **South & East London Education & Community Trust Ltd**
- **VT Education and Skills**

The bidders have been asked to supply an Initial Submission of Outline Proposals (ISOP), on the basis of which we expect to reduce the list down to three, who will go into the third and final selection process, known as the Invitation to Negotiate (ITN). This will result in the selection of the preferred bidder in December and detailed negotiations with them on costs. In discussion with all the bidders we

have been exploring ways of reducing the timetable and we are currently seeking agreement to aim to reach financial close (i.e. the formal appointment of the SPO) by the end of March 2006 – about three months earlier than originally expected.

The schools included in Greenwich's first phase programme are:

- Crown Woods – new build (using conventional capital)
- Eltham Hill – refurbishment and extension using conventional capital
- Plumstead Manor - refurbishment and extension using conventional capital
- The John Roan- new build (on a new site) using PFI credits
- Thomas Tallis – new build on its existing site using PFI credits

All the other secondary schools will be included in Phases 2 and 3. We know already that these will be added to the programme at an early stage of the overall national programme, and are likely to follow on no later than five years behind the implementation of Phase 1.

One of the main differences between PFI and conventionally funded schemes is that PFI new build schools are funded to allow them to be maintained to a high standard for the whole of the length of the agreement – i.e. 25 years. In contrast, the conventionally funded schools, once built, have to take their chances with the annual resourcing for maintenance. If we can, we want to avoid creating two classes of schools in Greenwich, so the funding model we have used to estimate the cost of the programme has assumed that an equivalent set of contractual agreements to PFI will be used to maintain the conventionally funded schools, allowing all the schools to be maintained to the same high standard irrespective of the source of the initial capital funding.

However, such a guarantee of course only comes at a price. It produces a larger "affordability gap"¹ which the Council and its schools will need to address if this desirable outcome is to be achieved in practice. No firm decisions have been made at this stage. Before they are we will need to know with much greater certainty what the potential cost implications are.

In the meantime, the Schools Forum, and all secondary schools, have agreed that a contribution from unallocated growth in the Schools Budget for 2004/5 of £438,000 should be used to begin building up a fund to help meet the affordability gap on the Phase 1 project which has been estimated – on a worst case scenario – to be potentially £4.7m per annum.

We are also currently working with the schools in the first phase on two key strands in support of the secondary transformation agenda that will underpin the design specifications for the new buildings:

- the development of the vision for each school (addressing such parameters as staff grouping in the context of workforce reform, school organisation in terms of key stage or faculty structures, curriculum development, length of the school day; week; and year, extended school features); and
- the strategy for ICT

We are continuing to work with the individual school champions and the Joint Schools BSF group (of Governors and Headteachers) to ensure the stakeholders are informed and engaged in developments – and keeping them quite busy...

Mike Bright, Assistant Director, Strategic Projects

Governors, the new OFSTED Inspections, and School Evaluation

Based on a talk by OFSTED inspector Colin Humphreys at a National Governors Council meeting and on the DfES publication 'New Relationships with Schools' (NRwS)

Under the new OFSTED inspection system, which starts in September, inspections will be much shorter (most only 2 days) and there will be much less notice given - normally 48 hours.

More importantly, there will be a serious change of emphasis - no longer will the inspectors base their reports on what they see and read. Instead they will base it mainly on a self-evaluation form (SEF) prepared by the school annually (some say termly!). The aim is to help schools identify their weaknesses and strengths, and then to sort out the weaknesses and develop the strengths. (NRwS says 'During an inspection an inspector must establish how well a school's senior staff and governors know its strengths and areas for improvement.')

Although most of the writing of the SEF will probably be done by senior staff of the school, governors should be involved in the self-evaluation process. NRwS says 'governors should be fully involved in the school review. Senior staff need to recognise also, that governors may need support and training to help them fulfil this role.'

Unfortunately, there seems to be little guidance as to what that might mean, but some ways governors were involved in the pilot scheme for this new process were

- By writing a paragraph for the leadership and management section evaluating their contribution to monitoring and to their own development (bear in mind that NRwS says 'It is important to keep in mind that leadership and management, including the effectiveness of governance, are judged primarily in terms of outcomes for learners.')
- By being involved in the school working parties set up to produce the SEF
- By sending out questionnaires to parents to discover if parents felt the school was achieving its aims.

Note that NRwS says 'It is not enough to just say that governors are good; such judgements must be clearly substantiated.' It goes on to say that inspectors will ask 'How do senior managers and governors monitor value for money in respect of staffing and resources?' and about 'the results of monitoring undertaken by the governing body, including the impact of performance management.'

Once the SEF has been completed, it has to be signed off by the governing body. NRwS says 'A completed SEF should reflect governors' involvement in a school's self-evaluation and show that it has been completed with the agreement of the governing body or appropriate authority.'

During the inspection, the OFSTED team will wish to see evidence of the school's claims in the SEF - they will wish to have an answer to the question 'How do you know?'

The inspectors will still want to meet governors as part of the inspection process, but with so little notice there are concerns that no governors may be available. It is up to governing bodies to nominate governors to meet the inspectors, and it is therefore important for governing bodies to have decided in advance what governors these should be - the Chair only? Chair and Vice Chair? Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Chairs? Whatever governors are available?

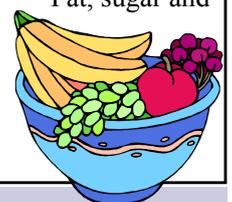
Inspections used to include a meeting with parents, but this doesn't seem to be feasible at such short notice. Instead, the inspectors will want to know how schools elicit the view of parents - and indeed of pupils.

After the inspection, NRwS suggests, 'Governors might find the SEF useful in focusing their discussions with senior staff on the success of the schools' work in term of outcomes for learners.' and 'Governors and staff will want to evaluate the plans they have implemented, any strategies for improvement, whether resources are being effectively used, and in particular the impact of action taken on the learning and well-being of the schools' learners'

Copies of NRwS and of 'A New Relationship with Schools: Next Steps' can be ordered, free, from: DfES Publications, PO Box 5050, Sherwood Park, Annesley, Nottingham, NG15 0DJ
Tel: 0845 6022260; fax: 0845 6033360;
E-mail: dfes@prolog.uk.com, quoting reference DfES-1288-2005DOC-EN and DfES-1290-2005DOC-EN

Healthy Snacks to Complement Jamie's School Dinners?

At a conference we picked up a leaflet for 'The Green Machine', a snack and drink machine offering 'only healthy products that are free from artificial colours, flavours, sweeteners and preservatives. Fat, sugar and levels are also carefully controlled, to ensure the most nutritious possible great-tasting range of popular snacks.'
If you are interested, phone 0870 9509710 or email: info@tgm.biz



Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere. - Chinese Proverb

REMODELLING AND PPA TIME

Did you know that, in addition to help on Workforce Reform issues from LEA Remodelling Advisers, the National Remodelling Team also have a team of Regional Advisers who can give advice and assistance. For more information please contact: the NGC Office: National Governors' Council, Lonsdale House, 52 Blucher Street, Birmingham B1 1QU
Tel: 0121 616 5104 Fax: 0121 616 5105
E-mail: ngc@ngc.org.uk Website: www.ngc.org.uk

*** An Invigilation Resource Pack has been developed by WAMG: copies are available from Prolog on 0845 602 2260 quoting reference NRT/0065/2005*

How do we know how well we are doing as a Governing Body?

Self evaluation seems to be one of the new “in words” in school management. Certainly it is the main tenet of the new OFSTED framework, as the article in this edition of “Voice” points out. **But how do we know how well we as a governing body is doing?**

At Eltham Hill Technology College we have begun a process of governor self review which has not been too onerous nor too time-consuming. In fact we have managed to address these issues as an agenda item in our last few governor meetings and governors have all expressed the view that it is proving to be very useful.

We have taken the following steps:

1. At a meeting in July 04 we talked about how we might go about addressing the issue and I introduced the idea of completing the OFSTED seven point scale on assessing governing bodies. The scale itemises the OFSTED 7 judgements (e.g. Very Good, Good Satisfactory etc) and alongside this it states the criteria that are looked at to arrive at these judgements (there are about 6 criteria under each of the judgement statements). Governors were given a copy to take away and look at.
2. Prior to the next governor meeting I printed off more copies of the OFSTED scale and the clerk sent out copies of this to all governors with the agenda prior to the governors meeting, so that everyone had a chance to look at it again.
3. At the November meeting 20 mins was set aside on the agenda. A few minutes were given to allow governors to tick which criteria they felt best fitted our governing body. The governors were then divided up into 4 groups (we had 18 governors at the meeting) and a brief discussion followed in each group where governors talked about the similarities and differences of their responses. It became clear from the feedback that there was quite a degree of unanimity among the governing body as to how well we were doing, although there were obviously some differences in perception. Individual responses were collected in.
4. Before the March meeting, one of our Chairs of committee analysed the responses and sent out copies to all the governors before the meeting. During the main meeting we again set aside a few minutes on the agenda for him to feed back and explain the results. We decided at the meeting that we wanted to work on some issues that we were not doing so well on as we wanted to be more effective and to be able to work more strategically.
5. At the next meeting in July we shall be looking at three sheets in the new National Training Programme for New Governors. Divided into 3 groups, one group will discuss “Governing Bodies working Strategically”, another will look at “Effective governing bodies” and the third will discuss “the governing body as a critical friend”.
6. After 20 mins we shall feed back what each group thinks we need to do to move on – and we’ll plan our next moves.

This process is not complete; we have not changed dramatically as a result – but it has made out termly governor meeting more interesting! It has also got us working together, talking about how we are doing and made us more committed to doing what we do even better. It may also impress OFSTED but that will be an offshoot, not the main aim of the exercise.

Let us know what your governing body is doing.

*Margaret Wasdell,
Chair of Governors, Eltham Hill Technology College*

Assessment Centre for prospective Headteachers

An offer open to Greenwich schools who are appointing a new headteacher is the provision of an assessment centre for short-listed candidates. The assessment centres is designed to help in the selection of headteachers for urban schools. We sent our candidates to the centre and on the day of selection an assessor came from the centre and fed back the results. They were presented in a very clear and concise manner and as a selection panel we found the process helpful. I have seen the feedback booklet, which is provided to candidates, and it provides a full description of the candidate’s strengths and weaknesses. It would be just as helpful to the unsuccessful candidates.

*Jim Draper, Chair of Governors,
Charlton Manor School*

A HEADTEACHER’S VIEW

When short-listed for the post of headteacher I was told that I would need to attend the assessment centre for prospective headteachers of urban schools. Here I would be assessed against the nine characteristics of an urban leader. These were, Accountability and consistency, Purposeful influencing, Filtering, judging and acting, Open and connected leadership, Leading learning, Focus and simplicity, Community engagement, Enduring resilience and Courage and conviction. This seemed like a tall order. I went to the assessment centre unsure of what the day held.

On arrival I met the other prospective headteachers and we were led to a classroom where we were given an agenda for the day and met the four assessors.

The first activity was a classroom observation using a video recording of a teaching session. We were given the

background of the teacher we would observe; this outlined the experience of the teacher and the role they held within the school. We then watched them teach an art lesson. Following this we each fed back our observation to one of the assessors who role-played the teacher, while another assessor observed. This enabled the assessors to identify how we would feedback to teachers and our ability to identify essential areas for development of the teacher.

Following this there was a critical incident. This again took the form of role-play. I was acting as the headteacher and the assessor brought an issue to me. The issue involved other members of staff. Again I was required to identify the underlying issue and respond in a supportive manner.

For the next task I was given an Ofsted report, a letter from a local shopkeeper and a letter from a councillor all of which related to a fictitious school. I was given 90 minutes to read the report and letters, identify the key areas for development and produce an action plan. I was also required to produce a plan of how to improve the local reputation of the school and engage the community. I then had to present the community plan to an assessor.

Finally I had to talk through issues that I had dealt with within my school and discuss why I had taken the choices I had.

Two weeks later I received a report on my performance. The report covered each of the nine areas and identified where my strengths were and where I needed to develop. The information, I felt, was accurate, thorough and useful for me to carry forward my development. Any leader undergoing this assessment would find it a very useful experience whether they are appointed or not.

Tim Baker, Head, Charlton Manor School