

## HAVE YOU CONSIDERED HAVING A PUPIL GOVERNOR?

There has recently been a discussion amongst governors across the country on the idea of having a pupil governor. Here are some of the views expressed.

A. From a governor in Hackney:

Definitely very appropriate, in my view, for secondary school students to become Associate Governors - an excellent part of Citizenship Training as well as having other advantages. Students are stakeholders and their voices should be heard.

Possibly the timing of most meetings (ours are at 6.30- 9.0 ) and length of agendas make full attendance a bit difficult for younger primary students. However, I really believe that they get a lot out of involvement with the Governing Body, and it's a useful lesson in democracy for the students. There are other ways of encouraging this involvement if we think they're a bit young for associate membership.....

This is what we do at our primary:

- school council reports regularly to the GB - these are taken like any other report and responded to
- when appropriate/necessary/they want to, the School Council sends a rep. to discuss their report with us. It's an open invitation, as long as they give me, as Chair, reasonable notice
- I and other governors have attended School Council meetings, by their invitation or our suggestion, to talk both about what governors do and to discuss issues raised by the children.

This works well for us and makes a formal link between the two bodies. Students see it as another dimension to their voice being listened to and they appreciate being treated as responsible people with sensible views by other adults beyond the school staff. Some of the youngsters will certainly want to be governors later because of this early grounding!

Finally.....I've some concern about the suggestion that children will be bored! If GB meetings are indeed that 'boring' all the time, then the governors need to look to what's going on. At the same time, there are possibly

elements to all meetings which could be considered to be 'boring', but that's part of the democratic process which we're supposed to be encouraging children to be part of. Anyway, the children themselves may well have good ideas on what can be done to make things less 'boring', if indeed they think it is. We can often learn a lot from them! But could this also be an unconscious cover for not really wanting to involve the children or let them see the teachers/head/support staff in a more 'equal' context?

B. From a governor in Stroud:

At Stroud High School we have had School Council (and District Youth Council) representatives attend Main Board Meetings for several years and they have given us their reports as a normal part of the meeting - and attended all of the meetings (except for confidential items). Since reconstitution these student representatives have been afforded Associate Member status with a one year term of office. We have just welcomed students for the second year as Associate Members and feedback from the end of last year (from the students and Governors) was very positive.

At primary school we have not had students present at Governors' meetings though the member of staff attending School Council meetings regularly gives feedback to Governors.

C. And from New Zealand:

In New Zealand, all members of a school's Board of Trustees (whose duties are very similar to that of our governing bodies) must have a pupil member, who is, they stress, treated as a full member of the Board. When confidential matters such as discipline action for a teacher arises, the pupil is given a chance to opt out - and most of them do. But if the pupil wishes to be involved, they can be!

Just what every governing body wants four pages of A4, that tells you what decisions to make. Well not quite but what the decision planner on the governornet website does do is to show at what level decisions can be taken so there is clarity as to what needs full governing body approval or a task that can be undertaken by an individual governor. It also shows the decisions which may be taken by the headteacher. This advice can be found at:

<http://www.governornet.co.uk/publishArticle.cfm?contentid=1120&topicAreald=1&pageStart=1&sortOrder=title&searchWhere=all&searchString=Decision%20Planner>

Or, perhaps more realistically by going to [www.governornet.co.uk/](http://www.governornet.co.uk/) and entering 'Decision

### GOVERNING BODY DECISION PLANNER

Planner' into the search box, then scroll down to 'Governing Body Decision Planner dated 30 November 2005. The decision planner is then available in Word or PDF format. Quite why the website still hosts outdated versions of the decision planner is beyond me but just ensure the planner you click on is dated 2005.

Just one word of warning Southwark Diocesan Board of Education states that Tasks 42, 47 and 48 are inaccurate for VA schools. They also suggested that Task 51 is incorrect for all maintained schools as governors have a clear duty in respect of collective worship.

Jim Draper

# Voice

Association of Greenwich  
Governors' Newsletter

SPRING 2006

## WHAT MAKES AN EXCELLENT GOVERNING BODY?? HEAR THE ANSWER FROM AN EXPERT!

On June 12 Penny Holden from OFSTED will be speaking to governors on 'What Makes a Satisfactory Governing Body an Excellent One?' Those of us who went to the initial training in the summer term last year on the new OFSTED procedures will remember what an excellent speaker Penny is.

The meeting is open to all governors, and will be in the Old Library at Charlton House. Tea/coffee and biscuits will be available from 7.00. The meeting will be from 7.30 - 9.30, and will be in conjunction with the AGM of the Association of Greenwich Governors.

We will send out a written reminder closer to the time through schools (it's too expensive to write to individual governors directly). However, sometimes documents sent out this way don't get to individual governors, so make sure you put this in your diary now! If you would like to have a reminder by e-mail, send your e-mail address to [margery@nzerem.com](mailto:margery@nzerem.com). If you would like to have an AGM pack sent to you, please contact Carol Wood by 29 May, by post (106 Gregory Crescent) phone (8265-7080) or e-mail: [carol.wood106@virgin.net](mailto:carol.wood106@virgin.net)

### Agenda for AGM:

1. Welcome by Chair
2. Apologies for Absence
3. Minutes of last AGM
4. Matters arising
5. Annual report
6. Treasurer's report
7. Election of the Committee. Nominations will be taken at the AGM  
a) Chair. b) Vice-Chair. c) Secretary. d) Treasurer.  
e) 6 other Committee members.
8. Appointment of Honorary Auditor
9. Resolutions from Members
10. Any other business



### A SERIOUS ERROR

We apologise to Ruth Gabriel. An error in the last edition of Voice completely changed the meaning of one of her sentences. She wrote 'I am not talking about race, as mention before moral breakdown affect every individuals in our society regardless of what nationality, culture or race.'; we left out the not.

### BICHARD ENQUIRY - SAFER RECRUITMENT ONLINE TRAINING FOR GOVERNORS

The Bichard Enquiry Report published in June 2004 recommended that:

- Head teachers and school governors should receive training on how to ensure that interviews to appoint staff reflect the importance of safeguarding children.
- From a date to be agreed, no interview panel to appoint staff working in schools should be convened without at least one member being properly trained.

Safer Recruitment is an online training course, commissioned by the DfES and developed by NCSL, in response to the Bichard Enquiry. The aim by spring 2006 is to have one person on every interview panel who has successfully completed this training. Governing bodies should nominate the person likely to be involved in most interviews. It is important that a member of the governing body undertakes this training. Your Head must give the details of the person nominated when s/he goes online to do their own training; the nominated governor will then be contacted by Safer Recruitment.

The online training tool provides information on a safer school culture and valuable advice and guidance to strengthen

safeguards against employing unsuitable people in schools. The training will help schools demonstrate that they have effective recruitment and selection processes in place. Ofsted will be reviewing recruitment practices as part of their inspection process and it will be important that schools can demonstrate good practice.

**NOTE THAT THE TRAINING SESSIONS GIVEN BY GREENWICH DO NOT REPLACE THE ONLINE TRAINING, AND IT IS IMPORTANT THAT ONE GOVERNOR FROM YOUR GOVERNING BODY DOES COMPLETE THE ONLINE TRAINING.**

At this stage, just one governor per school can be nominated to carry out the online training. It is for governing bodies to decide which of their members should be nominated. Governing bodies should ensure that the nominee is the most appropriate (i.e. the person likely to be involved in most interviews). It is important that a member of the governing body undertakes this training.

An online application form will be available on the Safer Recruitment website: [www.ncsl.org.uk/saferrecruitment](http://www.ncsl.org.uk/saferrecruitment) and schools will need to complete this on behalf of their nominated governor. The governor will then receive information in the post about how to access the training.

## SCHOOLS FORUM

You will recall that the Forum's principal purpose is to recommend to the Council how the schools budget share of the money given to the local authority by government should be divided. The Forum also considers issues such as how particular funding formulas are determined and if they need to be altered. It can also make certain other changes.

We've just had a meeting when we've had to do all of these.

January's meeting is always its busiest as this is when the arrangements for the new financial year begin to take real shape. And on this occasion we were thinking for the first time of the two-year settlement. For 2006-07 the likely schools budget sum totals about £10.8m and the year after that about £11.8m and there have been changes in the system too.

The other subjects just considered were, after proper consultation, agreeing to recommend changes in the funding provision for admin and management in special schools and to consider a presentation and progress report from the consultant commissioned by the Forum to continue the work about funding for statemented provision in mainstream.

My problem now is that I feel to try to summarise these in a few paragraphs could risk injustice and errors. So how can this (and other) business be reported to you? What strikes me as the important aspect to convey is how the Forum's representatives are available to you. "Use your reps" must be the slogan.

You elect governors to the Forum from all the school phases and we are there not only to determine these sort of issues but also for you to give us your views and to explain decisions should that be wanted. Governors services or meetings co-ordinator Tim O'Brien can put you in touch.

Allan MacCarthy  
Chair, Greenwich Schools Forum  
January 7<sup>th</sup> 2006.

### NEW CHAIRS - WOULD YOU LIKE SOME SUPPORT?

If you are a new Chair, or about to become one, and would like to be linked up with an experienced Chair who can offer your support, please contact Sue LeBas, 83177 7743, [suelebas@talk21.com](mailto:suelebas@talk21.com)



### EXPERIENCED CHAIRS - CAN YOU HELP A NEW CHAIR?

The Association has a list of experienced Chairs who would be willing to support new Chairs? Could we add your name to the list? Please contact Sue LeBas, 83177 7743, [suelebas@talk21.com](mailto:suelebas@talk21.com)

## AWFUL ACRONYMS (AND OTHER PET HATES)

Please don't get me wrong, I'm not against jargon. It has its place. I wouldn't want my doctor, for example, to write to a specialist saying "I don't like the look of that manky bit on the end of the thing on his foot". I would hope for the use of accurate description between the two in medical lingo, even if I couldn't understand a word of it.

But why do so many educationalists of all people perpetually use acronyms rather than real words and ones which, just as you have become accustomed to them, they then change? Doesn't this all miss something of precision and understanding?

Consider some examples. If someone told you an awpu was an endangered species would you agree? (It's an age weighted pupil unit.) Can you distinguish between a DSG and a DFG or, for that matter, between a DFG and a BFG? (DSG is a dedicated school grant, I've seen DFG being used for Dyslexia Friendly Greenwich and if you don't know BFG . hint, Roald Dahl.)

And then there are some of the words that are used. Am I the only person who winces every time I hear that a school budget has been fully passported? Passport is a noun - one which I have always understood comes from the Latin "passus", a step, and "porta", a city-gate. Don't they mean transport, which can be a noun and a verb. It comes from Latin too, "trans", across, and "portare", to carry.

It could be worse. A few years ago I read a document produced by the Inner London Education Authority which had lots of graphs in it. A legend had been written under one which I have never forgotten - "the figures necessarily contain quasi-subjective apportionments". What is that? I presumed it meant the author had had to guess at some of it and I further speculated from the "necessarily contain" bit that this was because he or she had left original data at home on the deadline day and had to produce some material to send to the printers.

Which takes me back to my basic point, gobbledegook (a representation of the noise made by turkeys if you have ever wondered) lacks precision and understanding.

Surely it is better to use simple, plain, English.

Allan MacCarthy  
(a primary school governor and Chair of the Schools Forum)

### ADVICE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT FOR GOVERNORS

Our clerks are of course a good source of advice for governors and governing bodies and probably our first point of call. But another excellent source of advice is Goverline, offering free advice. The number is 08000 722 181, and then are available from 9 am to 10 pm weekdays, 11 am to 4pm weekends - or visit [www.governorline.info](http://www.governorline.info)

And for information, discussion boards, consultations - really almost anything a governor would want - try [www.governornet.co.uk/](http://www.governornet.co.uk/)

## 16 MONTHS IN MALAWI A WORLD AWAY FROM EDUCATION FINANCE IN GREENWICH

No amount of time could have prepared me for the reality of the journey from the airport in Blantyre, Malawi. The sights, sounds and smells of Africa. Women carrying great loads on their heads, babies on their backs, bicycles overloaded with charcoal bags, goats and chickens, roadside vendors selling vegetables, fruit and a miscellany of other goods. So many coffin workshops, people begging, children scavenging for food. The colours, poverty, squalor, sickness and the occasional glimpse of affluence. So many contrasts. I will never forget these first impressions and the emotions aroused in me. I had arrived and Malawi, the warm heart of Africa, was to be my home for the next sixteen months.

I was sent to work with Blantyre Synod, a Presbyterian organization covering the whole of Southern Malawi. Blantyre Synod has sixteen Presbyteries, over 400 congregations, 265 primary schools, 39 community day secondary schools, two mission hospitals, food fortification production units, a youth centre, training centre for rural farmers and a number of other departments covering Youth, Music, HIV/AIDS, Women's Desk, Estates and Building. Members exceed 1.3m expanding to several times that number when children are included. The Synod reaches out to the very poorest and most vulnerable communities in Southern Malawi. No shortage of work in an organization this size for a volunteer accountant!

My initial brief was to carry out an internal audit, which included an examination of accounting systems, procedures and structures. I led on implementing structural changes, mentoring and supporting staff, developing training programmes, introducing new financial systems, procurement of a network system and new accounting software, transport scheduling and fuel controls. In addition the accounts had not been audited for five years, international donor confidence was at an all time low, the organization was suffering a severe cash flow crisis and the accounts were in a mess! A priority was to establish "ring fenced" protection for the donor funds and to bring the accounts to external audit.

But it was not just a desk job. My work with international donors took me out to projects in rural areas; repairing school roofs, building badly needed classrooms, pit latrines, bore holes and orphan feeding programmes. My audit work took me to all the mission stations, women's and youth centres and allowed me to deliver training workshops to finance staff.

I travelled widely in my work and spent many long hours on dirt track roads. I did not always have access to a car and sampled every mode of transport in Malawi from a bicycle taxi to a matola (open truck). Believe you me; the northern line is a comparative delight.

But Malawi is a beautiful country with the most generous people I have ever met. I took the opportunity to travel widely during my leave period visiting the Lake, Zomba Plateau, Mulanje Mountain and Liwonde National Park. I got hooked on Mulanje mountain and climbed one of the peaks at 6000 feet four separate times. A good way to keep fit at thirty degrees centigrade. A rather risky weekend bus trip through Mozambique to Harare in Zimbabwe set the adrenalin flowing - but that's another tale.

The job was probably the most difficult I have ever done, paid the worst (a meager allowance) but what an incredible privilege to have taken part.

Sue Peach  
Head of Education Finance

## CHALLENGES FOR GOVERNORS

The National Governors Council would like to hear from governors about how the introduction of TLRs and review of staffing structure went in schools. Phone, email or write to the office with your views: National Governors' Association, Lonsdale House, 52 Blucher Street, Birmingham B1 1QU, Tel: 0121 616 5104 Fax: 0121 616 5105, [www.ngc.org.uk](http://www.ngc.org.uk) email: [ngc@ngc.org.uk](mailto:ngc@ngc.org.uk)

Are you ready for the next challenge: extended schools? The NRT (in conjunction with NGC, NASG, NCOGs and ContinYou) is preparing a guide for Governors which should be ready early in the New Year - watch the NGC website for details.

### THE STEER REPORT

The Steer report on behaviour and discipline has been widely welcomed by headteacher and teaching unions, Ofsted and governors. A briefing paper will be available on the NGC website in the New Year.

### TES Governors' Education Network

Join the free TES Governors Network! Membership includes a termly four page bulletin summarising all the latest developments and ideas in education.

Sign up on the TES website: [www.tes.co.uk](http://www.tes.co.uk) or e-mail [maureen.mctaggart@newsint.co.uk](mailto:maureen.mctaggart@newsint.co.uk) or write to TES Governors Information Network, Unit 25, Bridge Close, Edisons Park, Crossways, Dartford DA2 6QP