

The Improving Leadership Programme (ILP) has been running in Greenwich for the past 2 years. Set up in September 2007, partly in response to the fact that Greenwich, like many other boroughs was facing a dramatic shortfall of school leaders, it has many challenges to face. Over the next 5 years 35 Head teachers in the Borough (40%) could retire at the age of 60 and about 40% of Deputy Heads are over 50. So in the next few years many schools in Greenwich will be looking for a new Head teacher – not an easy task with 1 in 3 Head teacher vacancies in the borough currently having to be re-advertised.

IMPROVING AND INVESTING IN LEADERS IN GREENWICH WHAT EVERY GOVERNING BODY SHOULD KNOW

However over the past 2 years the Improving Leadership Programme has begun to address these issues.

- New Headteachers are being supported and mentored
- Potential leaders are being identified at both senior and middle leader level and appropriate support and challenge offered
- A targeted support group of Deputy heads have completed their programme of training – 12 of these have applied for headship and 5 have so far been successful
- A coherent strategy for succession planning is being drawn up
- A new very attractive glossy brochure to be sent to applicants for Headship posts in Greenwich, with the Greenwich strap line, "Time for Children" has been produced and sent to schools (as well as an excellent guidance booklet for governors)
- Already the number of schools having to re-advertise Headship vacancies has reduced from 1 in 2 to 1 in 3 Day and half day conferences for senior leaders have been run, bringing in excellent, challenging speakers

How can Governors be involved?

There are 3 governors on the ILP Board (Steve Piper, Chair of Conway; Ann Jefferson, Chair of Rachel McMillan and Margaret Wasdell, Chair of Eltham Hill) and governor issues and perspectives are given high priority.

- Governors are crucial in the appointing of a Headteacher and schools need to be aware the age profile of their leadership team and to address the vital issue of succession planning as well as indentifying potential new leaders at every level of the school
- Talk to your Head teacher to obtain her/his perspective on leadership issues in your school
- Discuss these issues at your governors meetings
- Be proactive in asking questions about succession planning
- Find out who on the staff of your school is involved in the ILP programme and get them to talk about it

Encourage senior staff to go on relevant conferences - in October David Hopkins is speaking on "Every School a good School".

Margaret Wasdell

'BANNING' LETTERS TO PARENTS

There have been some changes to the procedure for issuing 'banning letters' to parents. In the past these were sent out from the Children's Services under the signature of the Director. This is not legally sustainable and in future any 'banning letters' should be signed either by the head teacher or the chair of governors. It is thought many heads will prefer the chair of governors to sign these letters. If as chair you do sign these letters it is important in the case of a legal challenge is made that you understand why the banning is taking place and agree with that decision.

*Jim Draper
Chair, AGG*

INVOLVING PARENTS A SUCCESSFUL FAMILY LEARNING CENTRE

to ensuring that everyone reaches their full potential.

Ealdham School is changing the name of their Family Learning Centre, in memory of Sally Castle, Head Teacher of Ealdham 2002-2009. Sally sadly passed away in May, after a long and determined battle with cancer. Sally's dedication and commitment to life-long learning resulted in the building of this centre.

*Neil Stevens
Chair of Governors
Ealdham Primary School*

Ealdham Primary School is working extremely hard to support parents, carers and the local community by creating opportunities for learning. Courses include I.C.T for beginners, First Aid, Parenting Skills, Cake Decorating and many more; some of which lead to a recognised qualification. Most of our courses are provided by Greenwich Community College, who is the largest provider of further and adult education in Greenwich. Ealdham is dedicated and committed

IS FINANCIAL TRAINING FOR ALL GOVERNORS NECESSARY? (Information from the National Governors Association)



The Audit Commission has argued that schools should have more stringent financial checks. Governors in particular should receive specific training in financial matters, said the Commission in evidence to the education select committee.

Whilst we agree that governors should be trained the NGA does not support this proposal, for two reasons:

Firstly there is the current FMSiS programme (Financial Management in Schools Standard). FMSiS assessors usually request evidence that the governing body has had some training in financial procedures. It is frankly disappointing that the Audit Commission do not appear to know this.

More importantly there are over 80 separate statutory requirements for governing bodies; it would be crackers to expect specific training for each one. Governors are volunteers, not full time professionals.

A more intelligent reform would be to ensure, as the NGA has consistently argued, that all governors should be adequately trained for the role, and that all Chairs should receive training for their additional responsibilities.

Alongside that should be a recognition that schools are complex enterprises. Heads, even Heads who have the NPQH qualification, are not financial managers. All schools should be looking to recruit professionals with specific financial expertise. Smaller schools should be investigating means of sharing such expertise with other schools to make the posts affordable for their context.

A MORE BALANCED GOVERNING BODY



We have school strategy community of minorities than 'grow our own teachers'; and have recruited our support staff locally and through the school community.

The AGG asked The Chair of Governors at James Wolfe to write about how they have improved their proportion of black and minority ethnic governors.

At James Wolfe Primary School we have 18 governors and 5 of them (28%) are from ethnic minorities. Our school population is 44% ethnic minorities so we are moving in the right direction.

managed to recruit more ethnic minority governors as part of a whole to improve make our staff and leadership more representative of the school. We have more teaching and support staff from ethnic ever before; we have made use of the graduate training programme to

We have also done a lot to change the look of our Parents Association. In recent years we have managed to attract officers from the ethnic minority parents, and have put on events that appeal to the whole school population such as our fantastic International Evening, and Cabaret Nights. Our cook book, the Hungry Wolfe grew out of the success of the International Evening and includes recipes from the different cultures at our school.

Four of our ethnic minority governors are parents and have been elected by the parent community. Our efforts to include all our community in our activities at school have meant that these parents are known to their voters and feel comfortable standing election. Our parent elections a fiercely fought contests and in recent years we have always had more candidates than places.

In addition we try to make the governors as approachable as possible. We have our photos up in the school's reception, and always have a presence at every parents evening where we run a governors surgery to enable parents to come to us with the comments and concerns. This is far more effective that the annual meeting for parents that we used to hold and to which hardly anyone came, especially from the schools ethnic minority parents.

*Diana Greaves
Chair
James Wolfe Primary school with centre for the deaf.*

IS ANYBODY WATCHING TEACHERS' TV?

If you are, please get in touch! In the last issue of Voice I asked governors who watched Teachers TV to email me at jim.draper@hotmail.co.uk I had a nil response!

*Jim Draper
Chair, AGG*

All new governors are overwhelmed with abbreviations when they first become a governor, the SEF being one of these that is increasingly mentioned at Governor meetings – and rightly so! The SELF EVALUATION FORM (SEF) is one of the most important documents that every school has to produce – and governor ownership of this is vitally important, particularly in the light of the **new OFSTED framework to be introduced from September 2009.**

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SEF & SOME CHANGES TO IT

Why is the SEF important?

What is the SEF?

Each school has to produce a document (based on a very clear framework) that analyses its strengths giving clear evidence to back this up and then evaluates its performance against very clear criteria provided by Ofsted.. From July 2009 all SEFs will have to follow the new framework

This document is the base used by OFSTED inspectors before they carry out their inspection – the OFSTED Inspection tests the validity of the judgments the school has made of itself in its SEF.

What is the new Framework?

From this September OFSTED inspections will be working to the new framework which makes explicit expectations for governors and includes an enhanced judgment on governance.

Key features of the new framework include an evaluation of the school's capacity for improvement, the quality of its self evaluation and the effectiveness of its leadership & management. The role of governors in challenging the school, identifying its weaknesses and seeing that they are overcome will be assessed.

What should governors do?

- Make sure you know the content of your SEF & that you understand and agree with the judgments made and make certain that the SEF clearly states the evidence to back these up.
- Have the SEF on the agenda at governor meetings.

What help is there for governors?

- Each school has a **School Improvement Partner (SIP)**; appointed by the borough to help to evaluate the SEF, provide a challenge to the school and support the school in building capacity of the leadership group. In some schools governors are invited into some of the SIP's meetings with the Leadership group, and SIPs are now expected to report back annually to the governing body about the way they have supported the school over the year. **Find out how your SIP has been supporting your school and invite the SIP to a governors meeting in school**
- Governor Services are putting on courses on the SEF – **make sure your governing body is represented and then disseminate the information.**

Margaret Wasdell



POLICIES & TRAINING AVAILABLE FROM TEACHERS' TV

The governors' area of the website - www.teachers.tv/governors - includes expert advice, the 'best of the web' reviews, a poll of school governors and links to programmes. There is a wealth of additional material online designed to help improve the performance of school governors. These range from detailed lists of related websites, through downloadable supporting documents, to a new library of complete high-quality presentations addressing CPD (Continuous Professional Development) issues. They are completely **free** to use, and have been extensively tested during development. They are ready to use 'off the shelf' in training or can be customised better to meet the needs of an individual school.

Governor presentations

Teachers' TV's governor training presentations provide useful material to facilitate 30-minute discussion sessions at meetings. Each presentation includes video clips and discussion starters to spark debate about good practice.

Programme information can be found by visiting the home page at: www.teachers.tv and clicking on *Full TV Guide* at the foot of the page. Every Monday night at 7pm is **Governors' Hour**.

TTV can be found on Sky 880, Virgin TV 240, Freesat 650 and Freeview 88 (4–6pm). TTV programmes can also be viewed online at: www.teachers.tv.

BEING A PARENT GOVERNOR

I am a parent governor at a state secondary school in Greenwich, South-East London. I had always taken part in fundraising and special events at my son's primary school, where I had regular contact with his teachers and made many good friends in the playground at the start and end of each school day. It saddened me to think that this would probably not be the case once he started secondary school. So, when my son joined the school in

year 7 I thought it would be interesting and beneficial to become involved, in some way, with other parents and also staff at his new school.

I initially joined the 'Parents in Partnership'. Its aim was to work with the school to promote events that would encourage parents, whole families, friends and local residents to get involved with the school – social evenings, talent shows, free evening classes etc. We also helped out at parent's evenings and prospective parent's events, serving tea and coffee and talking to parents about the school, answering their questions from a fellow parent's point of view.

I would recommend becoming a parent governor. It can be frustrating and demanding at times, but it is also extremely interesting and rewarding.
- Rebecca Vicary

A year later, the governing body were looking for new parent governors, and the chair of 'Parents in Partnership', who was also a two other parents from 'PIP' to stand. We were elected onto the governing body unopposed. My initial reaction was pure fear – what if I made a complete and utter idiot of myself? I felt horribly ignorant, like a fraudulent impostor who would surely be 'found out' before too long. I suspect that my fellow 'newbies' felt the same way, even though we had been warmly welcomed by the other governors. I decided to keep my head down at meetings, to listen and learn. Gradually, my confidence grew and I felt able to contribute to discussions. I attended governor training (three evening sessions) which were very informative and helpful. I also started to make visits to the school, in my case to the music department, and to get to know some of the staff.

I have been a governor now for four years. The school has been through a very turbulent period, with many changes of head teacher, and the governing body has had to make many challenging and difficult decisions.

I have found the whole process fascinating. There are always so many issues to consider – academic achievement, pastoral care, staff development and satisfaction, curriculum – and of course the small matter of finance! The governing body comes from all walks of life, with different talents and attributes. There are some with vast experience in education, local councillors, businessmen and women, lawyers and parents. We all bring something to the table. While parent governors might lack knowledge in some areas, they can, through 'the grapevine', offer an insight into the day to day running of the school such as pupil behaviour and attitudes, homework, uniform, after school activities etc.

Becoming a parent governor is not a massive commitment in terms of time spent at meetings. There is a main meeting every couple of months preceded by smaller sub committee meetings. Governor visits to school are always encouraged, but obviously, people have differing work commitments and some governors manage to visit more frequently than others. They are also occasionally asked to sit on panels for senior leadership interviews, exclusions etc or to attend special events when they can.

I would recommend becoming a parent governor. It can be frustrating and demanding at times, but it is also extremely interesting and rewarding.

Rebecca Vicary

Association of Greenwich Governors' Newsletter

Voice
AUTUMN 2009

WORKING ON YOUR BEHALF

Your committee has over the year worked on a number of issues which at one time or another concern all schools. One of them is the challenge of deciding what salary to offer when advertising for a new Head. When setting the salary range for a head teacher guidance is given by the 'School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document' which contains a formula for setting the pay range. The document also allows for the calculated pay range to be exceeded in cases where it is expected that there will be difficulty in recruitment. This probably applies to the majority of Greenwich schools the difficulty for governors is knowing at what level to set the pay range to attract suitable applicants but not wasting the school's resources especially as advertising for a head teacher must be done nationally which is expensive. The aim is to pay competitive salaries but not excessive salaries. We have been discussing this problem with HR, and it has been agreed that governing bodies that need to appoint a new Head will be provided with details of the salaries of heads of similar schools, although the information will not contain the names of the schools.

Another simple concern was the need for governors to know who to contact within Children's Services when problems arise. Old hands may still have the old A5 directory which tells us that George Gyte is the Director and Brian Vallely heads up Governor Services, since then there has not been a useful directory apart from the massive cross council directory. Children's Services are now going to publish an up to date directory it will also show the management structure of the Children's Services.

Jim Draper
Chair, AGG

