

Devon Association of Governors

Issues raised at Area Governor Meetings Autumn 2008

This report is a summary of points raised by governors at the Area Meetings held earlier this term in the following Local Learning Communities: Axe Valley, Exmouth, Honiton, Ottery-St-Mary and Sidmouth : Dawlish, Newton Abbot, Teign Valley and Teignmouth : Culm Valley and Tiverton : Holsworthy, Okehampton and Tavistock. These meetings were attended by governors, clerks and headteachers from many schools in these areas. Discussion focused initially on the termly 'Checklist' of current issues sent to all Devon schools at the beginning of each term and also available on the Devon Governor Services web site: www.devon.gov.uk/governors. Further discussion embraced other issues of current concern raised by those present. The sections

- in normal type indicate points from the Checklist or made by me at the meetings
- in italics indicate comments made by governors at the meetings
- in bold indicate the questions with responses in red (where received) from LA officers, NGA and others to the points raised

This is a very detailed report which will almost certainly have items of immediate relevance to your school / GB. It offers answers to questions that may have been concerning your GB (Section A), provides an insight in to what fellow governors are thinking about topics of current concern (Sections A + B) and adds additional key information since the Checklist was published (Section C). Please share this report with your GB, in particular committee chairs. There are also cross-references to the Devon Governor that should have arrived in schools in the first week after half-term.

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List of main topics:

School Improvement Partners	Children in Care
New Standards for School Meals	Health & Safety Audit
Community Cohesion	Federation and Partnership
Building Schools for the Future	Job Evaluation
Financial Issues	Governing Body Procedures
Single Point of Entry Consultation	LLC Learning Data Sets
Conflict of Interest for Governors	A range of other topics

All meetings began with a reminder that there is much to celebrate in the hard work that has led to Devon's recent successes in the world of education. Judith Johnson (Director of Learning & Schools, CYPS) introduced a presentation to the recent Devon Education Forum meeting by outlining a whole range of achievements by young people and staff working within Devon schools. This information is *in slides 3 - 15 of the presentation at* <http://www.dag.gb.com/cypsupdate24sept08.htm>

SECTION A: A Issues Seeking Feedback from LA Officers, DAG and NGA

1. Primary School Improvement Partners	7. Building Schools for the Future
2. Children In Care	8. Job Evaluation
3. New Standards for School Lunches for all Primary Schools	9. Financial Issues
4. School H & S Management Audit Changes for 2008/09	10. Safer Recruitment
5. Duty to Promote Community Cohesion	11. Governing Body Procedures
6. Federation/Partnership	12. NGA Request for Feedback about Teachers' TV

1. Primary School Improvement Partners undertake two visits to schools in the autumn term. One will support appointed governors in the headteacher performance management process. The other will focus on achievement and standards and personal development and wellbeing. Within this visit, statutory targets for the end of Key Stage 2 in 2010 will be agreed with the SIP and it is important governors and the headteacher discuss these targets prior to the SIP visit. For further details and cross references to useful documentation for these visits refer to the Primary Briefing Paper distributed electronically in week ending September 9th (<http://www.devon.gov.uk/sc-sept0821001.pdf>) This is a very helpful document and should be used!!!! Summary of outcomes from the summer term visit was sent out electronically w/e Sept. 16th (<http://www.devon.gov.uk/sc-sept0822048.pdf>)

Governor comment

- Don Paterson, Chair of DAG, would like the drive for governors to lift the improvement of performance of their school to be discussed. The spreading of good practice is on DAG's agenda for this year. It may be that we can develop some 'open days' for the sharing of good ideas. The list of OfSTED scores for Devon schools is available ... many are doing well but there are some that are quite outstanding and it is these schools that we could use as models for the rest of us. There will be considerable pressure for governors to demonstrate their effectiveness and this would be one way in which we could address the issue of performance
- The SIPs system appears to be working very well. No governor reported any problems and the continuity of seeing the same person every time is positive. This was regarded as an excellent government initiative
- Provided governors 'do their homework' the system provides an essential way for governors to consider the impact of what they do and to spend time on things that make a difference. It should enable GBs to set their own targets too
- There was also a lot of praise for the SEF process. One new HT had found the SEF available on arrival very informative and helpful in providing essential background information as well as something to build on

Governor questions

1. How do governors feel about sharing good practice?

2. Do other staff members sit in on the SIP meetings?

David Chaplin (Lead Primary Adviser: Primary SIP Manager): Headteachers and governors are welcome to invite other staff to participate in meetings with the SIP and this already happens in a number of schools. Often this involves other senior leaders, deputy or assistant headteachers or subject leaders for all or part of the meeting. In some instances, these groups of staff join SIP meetings as part of their own continuing professional development or as part of other programmes, such as NPQH.

3. Does what governors do make a difference?

Debbie Clapshaw (DGS): Governors who understand their strategic role and how this relates to the work of professionals within the school can make a very real difference. By asking the right questions and seeking out the best solution together with the head and the staff, lay volunteers have an important role to play. The best headteachers welcome appropriate challenge and recognise that in partnership with the governing body and utilising their experience and skills the team is strengthened.

4. Will OfSTED morph into the SIP system with 3-yearly visits being replaced by an ongoing inspection process?

DCh: OfSTED is currently consulting on a change to the inspection process from September 2009 – details on the OfSTED web site. The indications are that the two systems of SIPs and inspection will remain.

2. Children in Care (CiC) A new OfSTED report on good practice for CiC has recently been published - it highlights seven key elements which are known to make a difference in children's success rates at school. The key points are referred to in the letter at <http://www.devon.gov.uk/sc-sept0821031.pdf>.

All CiC have to have an up to date **Personal Education Plan** (PEP) and the **Personal Education Allowance** (PEA) is linked to this. As a corporate parent, Devon County Council is under a specific duty to promote the educational achievement of CiC (section 52 of the Children Act 2004). The Designated Teacher for CiC and the School Governor for CiC should ensure that each CiC has an effective, up to date PEP. Currently the LA is updating PEPs and the PEP Guidance. This will be sent out to schools electronically via school distribution. The white paper, **Care Matters: Time for Change**, confirmed the Government's commitment to introduce an annual Personal Education Allowance (PEA) for all CiC of statutory school age who are at risk of not reaching the national expected standards of attainment. A PEA of up to £500 a year will be made available for each child in the care of DCC who has been identified as eligible for additional support. Support should be tailored to their individual needs as identified in an up to date PEP. The PEA is not intended to replace, duplicate or substitute the services or support that DCC, schools, carers or other practitioners already provide for CiC. If you have any queries about the PEA please contact Kim Piper, Co-ordinator for CiC on 01392 384722 or email kim.piper@devon.gov.uk. More information on PEAs and an application and evaluation form, can be found at www.devon.gov.uk/j4s-formeducation. Finally, David Theobald (LA co-ordinator for support for CiC) attended a recent DAG Executive meeting where he gave some startling information about the gap in achievement between CiC and average levels for other children and outlined the many ways in which Devon is beginning to address this issue (see above).

Governor comment

- Most governors did know how many CiC (if any) were in their school. In small schools the HT would normally be the designated member of staff for CiC, and usually the SENCO in larger schools
- One governor did not like the idea of rewarding children for good attendance feeling that this is too divisive. Poor attendance is nothing to do with the child as family circumstances are usually responsible for whether a child attends well or not
- Another Governor commented that he is full of admiration for the support given to CiC but had concerns about private fostering agencies with the Social Services in other areas – access to support was problematic

Governor questions

1. How can governors best support CiC?

David Theobald: CiC should be a regular item on GB agendas. Governors should ask the following questions:

- Do you know how many (if any) CiC there are in your school?
- Has your school got a designated teacher with responsibility for CiC?
- Does the school have effective liaison with other agencies?
- Is good practice shared?

GBs should also consider identifying a nominated governor to champion the needs and support of CiC. If governors have any further concerns / enquiries contact me at david.theobald@devon.gov.uk

Deborah Booth (Strategic Project Manager, Achievement of Children in Care): I agree wholly with David's comments. We are aware that some GBs already do many of these things but there is a mixed pattern of provision at the moment.

3. New standards for school lunches for all Primary Schools have been in place since September. Primary schools must comply with new, nutrient-based standards for school lunches, which build on the food-based standards brought in last year. Schools have to ensure that, over a period of between one and four weeks, energy and nutrients contained in an average school lunch stay within given limits. For guidance on implementation or any questions e-mail info@sft.gsi.gov.uk, call 0800 089 5001 or visit www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk. Secondary Schools have one year left to comply with nutrient based standards outlined above for primaries.

Debbie Clapshaw has learnt that a number of primary schools (not in Devon) have decided to offer all pupils and staff free school meals in order to ensure that all the school community sit together to eat a healthy meal and that pupils have a chance to learn the value of such an occasion. She is interested to know whether governors feel this is money well spent even in a relatively non deprived community.

Governor comment

- *A mixed picture of reactions to current school meal provision emerged. Some schools had experienced an increase in uptake, others a drop. Meals had improved in most schools but not all. Some governors still felt that the current 'balanced diet' at their school was a long way from the goal and definitely 'nutrient poor'. Others said that the children do not enjoy the menus*
- *The success or failure of the provision of school meals depends on what children have at home. If they are dipping in and out of school meals and not having them on a daily basis they are still not getting the balance of recommended nutrients*
- *Regulations only apply to lunch and not to other meals taken in schools, so special schools with an element of residential provision can serve non-balanced meals at other times of the day*
- *The social aspect of eating together is important*
- *One governor commented that DDS had started well, but had gone back to providing an unsatisfactory service*
- *Generally, the uptake in primary schools seems OK and hopefully this will continue when children move on to secondary school eventually*
- *One school would like to see an uptake in children taking breakfast at school – but this needs to be prepared early enough for them to eat on arrival*
- *Queuing is an issue – one governor suggested that dishes be set out on tables and a parallel serving system be introduced*
- *Offering free meals may be the only way to address the problem of children eating nutritious and balanced meals. By doing this, though, is the government telling parents they no longer need to bother feeding their own children? Although the majority of governors present at meetings felt the provision of free school meals was worthwhile they also realised that funding will prove to be the major issue*

Governor questions

1. How would the additional uptake resulting from free school meals be staffed?

Ray Beale (Head of Business Strategies CYPs): At present there is no additional financial support to the County Council or schools to have Free Meals for All. We have however made enquires to the DCSF about the recent statement made by the Secretary of State about such pilots

2. Is DDS responsible for the 14 essential nutrients or is this down to the school to ensure the children are getting them?

RB: Where DCCS (DDS) is the meal provider, the responsibility to ensure nutritional standards rests with them

3. Would money for free school meals be taken from the budget for learning and achievement?

RB: Transfer of any monies from one budget heading to another on a countywide basis could only be sanctioned with the prior agreement of the Devon Education Forum

4. School Health and Safety Management Audit Changes for 2008/9 have been adopted. The 'audit' has been re-named a 'review', better reflecting the developmental emphasis of the process. The new system offers a number of advantages over the old:

- More consistency across different auditors
- The ability to analyse results and trends across schools and to target support where it is really needed.

- Clearer identification of priorities for Headteachers and school managers using a 'traffic light' system based upon legal requirements and levels of risk.
- Quicker report generation times
- The biggest change is however the greater degree of transparency in the system. Any audit is a measure against a standard so it consequently makes no sense to keep that standard a secret. School governors should look out for guidance which will be circulated early in the 2008/9 academic year.

Further information from: joseph.wood@devon.gov.uk or The Health and Safety Helpline on 01392 382027.

Governor comment

- *It was felt that there are still far too many mixed messages on this issue*
- *Health & Safety is proving to be a huge stress factor for HTs. DAPH have discussed risk management at length*
- *There appears to have been a lack of training in issues re buildings, electrical matters etc. Legionella remains a big area for concern*
- *HTs should ensure they have a governor who will take on the responsibility for an overview of H&S*

Governor questions

1. What has happened to the promised training for headteachers and governors?

Jane Lucas (DGS): There will be two separate Risk Management sessions for governors next term. Dates and course outline will go in Devon Governor and if successful we plan to do some more. A letter relating to the training for Primary School HTs will be sent out w/c November 3rd.

2. How is responsibility for these issues shared between HT and GB?

Ray Beale : It has been made clear to HTs that they, following training, have delegated responsibilities for CDM Regulations, Fire Safety Management, Legionella and Asbestos. The role of Governors is to ensure that these responsibilities are discharged appropriately.

5. Duty to Promote Community Cohesion is now part of the SEF and forms part of the Section 5 OfSTED inspections from September 2008. Current advice from OfSTED is that as this duty lies with GBs, it will be inspected under the section on Leadership and Management. It will be measured by how well the school knows its own school community and the individual groups within it. It will also be judged on what it contributes to community cohesion. DGS is working on a short guidance document to help schools address this duty, giving details on how OfSTED intend to inspect it. Schools have an increasing responsibility for taking forward the Community Cohesion Agenda. A new toolkit is being produced by The Institute of Community Cohesion and funded by the DCSF. The ICoCo website (<http://www.coventry.ac.uk/researchnet/icoco>) is also useful in helping schools to understand the new duty - follow 'toolkits' and then 'schools and cohesion'.

Discussion around this topic also led to looking at ways in which governors within LLCs could work together.

Governor comment

- *Many governors from village schools felt their school was already meeting this need. One HT present felt she was meeting this need and that there were more pressing issues higher up the school agenda*
- *The Honiton LLC is using Community Cohesion as a combined governor focus for schools in that area*
- *In a similar way the Axe Valley Group of governors has set up an initiative to meet with Learning Community Governors to work together over such issues as the provision of services etc. Honiton and Sidmouth have been invited to participate in some meetings with Axe Valley*

Governor questions

1. What constitutes a 'community' – does it mean catchment area?

Alice McShane (DGS): Community is defined as :

- The school community
- The community in which the school is located
- The UK community
- The global community

A Cohesive Community is defined as one in which

- There is a common vision and sense of belonging for all communities
- The diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued
- Similar life opportunities are available to all
- Strong and positive relationships exist and continue to be developed in the workplace, in schools and in the wider community.

2. Does this task fall to Community Governors?

AM: There is nothing in law to suggest that the Community Cohesion duty should fall to any individual governor although if governors decide to nominate a governor to oversee this duty it makes some sense that it could be a community governor.

3. Is this just another box ticking exercise?

AM: If schools embrace this duty fully it is far more than a box ticking exercise. At present the Governor Support Team is preparing a document to go out to schools to give some clarification around this duty. It should be ready some time after half term.

4. Is this perceived as more of a problem in urban areas?

AM: From national and regional conferences that I have attended it seems that issues around community cohesion are certainly different when comparing urban and rural communities, though not necessarily more or less of a problem, especially when we look at the wide ranging definition of 'Community'

5. Could DAG co-ordinate good examples of LLC initiatives by bringing together convenors of governor groups?

AM: Sharing of good practice is definitely of value. There are some examples on the national CoCo website but local examples would be much more meaningful

David Tall: DAG is contacting DASH and DAPH to determine a way ahead to develop these ideas across LLCs

6. Federation/Partnership This academic year sees 2 new federations in place - Tavistock Church Schools (St Peter's and St Rumon's) and Chulmleigh CC + Chulmleigh PS. They join the First Federation (Blackpool and Chudleigh Knighton PS), West Exmoor (Lynton, Parracombe and Kentisbury PS) and Dartmouth CC + Dartmouth PS. Devon has a thriving Federation Network and all five 'hard' federations will open their doors to visitors during the week November 10-14. For more information on booking a visit contact sue.clarke@devon.gov.uk

Governor comment

- *One governor had visited the federation at Blackpool and was very impressed, finding what they were doing very interesting*
- *Many felt the ideas around federation were sensible, especially if schools are on the same, or adjacent, sites*
- *One advantage is in the use of specialist teachers (music, PE, MFL etc), sharing them between schools.*
- *The recent federation meeting in Okehampton had been poorly attended – a pity, as it was very interesting*
- *One governor commented that, for small schools, it must be the way forward – they should do it before they are pushed!*

Governor questions

1. What would Devon feel if a Devon school federated with a school in Torbay, ie across the borough boundaries?

Debbie Clapshaw (DGS): Technically cross-border federation is possible and we would be more interested in any federation delivering something better for children rather than being too concerned about the cross-border issue. Generally we have overcome the obstacles that seem to be in the way although practice on the ground is outstripping some of the centralised processes, eg budget management. Any school within a federation remains with its own identity and is funded independently. It is the single strategic governing body making decisions on the best use of resources that makes the difference.

Sue Clarke (Strategic Lead for Achievement through Collaboration CYPS): It is really good to see the change in governor responses over the last couple of years and great to get positive feedback from governors who now have first hand experience of federation. I am pleased that a lively federation debate continues and that we have successful working models for governors to access. The federation open week (November 10– 14) will provide an ideal opportunity for governors to visit federations to see how they work and to ask lots of questions! Details have been sent to schools and are on the DAG website.

7. Building Schools for the Future DCC members are in the process of deciding whether they are going to seek early advancement of Devon in the BSF programme. One of the major consequences for governors will be that for the secondary schools that are to be rebuilt under PFI the governors will have to commit some of their revenue budgets for a period of 25 years to pay for cleaning, catering, security, maintenance, energy consumption etc. This was done for the Exeter Grouped Schools PFI. This is mainly a secondary school issue. Although the Primary Capital programme information from DCSF does suggest that Primary sector capital schemes could be funded from PFI that has not been part of DCC's core thinking in terms of PCP delivery in Devon. A GB from a school likely to be part of PFI will need to commit to the following:

- signing up to a "Governors' Agreement" - this commits a sum of money annually from the school's budget to the LA to pay for the services provided under the PFI that would normally be funded from the revenue budgets - maintenance, heating, lighting, catering, cleaning security etc. In Exeter the sum was negotiated but was at the low end of what the LA felt was reasonable. The mechanism for inflationary increases needs reviewing and also the mechanism for recouping costs where charges are volatile (energy bills are topical)!
- requiring GBs to abide by the area limits set out in Building Bulletin 98 as all new school projects have given rise to argument / debate about the amount of floor space that is available. Additional area would only be provided if schools and other stakeholders commit to fully funding extra costs
- agreeing to become one of the extended schools envisaged by DCSF and our CYPP - this can only be done if governors commit to a much broader open access patterns and agree to work collaboratively with local stakeholders (currently District Councils), third sector organisations and PFI contractors to widen community access to the building

- making appropriate financial provision for resourcing this kind of undertaking as the design development process for new school projects is very demanding of financial and human resources. This is especially challenging for GBs where we cannot make promises of when investment will take place. We have to work towards deliverable schemes to stand any chance of securing capital funding.
- finally, engaging in formulating their "Vision". This has proved very difficult, at LA level too, as many people find it hard to get big ideas down on paper. It is something that the LA is working on. We have to remember that BSF is about educational transformation. Schools that simply want to continue to operate as they are doing now, but in better buildings, will not pass muster. We need to encourage all school managers and GBs to engage in a debate about where education (and wider children and families services) are going in the next twenty years.

Governor comment

- *This is a huge plan to develop and rebuild secondary schools, but experience shows that the money from central government does not meet the full cost*

Vic Ebdon: It is for this reason that we will be seeking governors' acceptance of some of the "ground rules" for BSF investment that are set out above. We will aim to be clear about the obligations of all parties before entering BSF so that affordable schemes can be developed – schemes that will pass Partnerships for Schools' and Devon ratepayers' scrutiny.

Governor questions

1. What about primary schools – when will the Primary Capital Programme begin to operate and how does Devon intend to spend the money??

VE: The PCP announcement is due "early November" but these announcements are notoriously late! We have heard that the DCSF has approached LAs whose PCP submissions were weak, in order to give them an opportunity to revise them before the announcement. On the basis that we have not been asked to conduct a review, I am hopeful that we shall be looked upon favourably. Please note, however, that the PCP investment level for Devon has already been established and incorporated into our three year capital programme to March 2011. The announcement will, we hope, release that £14m funding for use. The draft prioritisation criteria were set out in our PCP submission and colleagues are working with a small focus group to refine these and establish the priority in which areas will be reviewed.

2. Will there be a move towards ' consolidating ' small schools on one site?

VE: This is a very challenging area for all of us. We know that there will be strong local and political feeling in some areas but we also know that by operating a multiplicity of small schools we are putting pressure on the Dedicated Schools Grant which is perceived by many as disadvantaging others. Balanced against this are Devon's ambitions and aspirations to create sustainable and green communities. We need to ensure that all data relating to an area is within the public domain so that an informed debate can take place and a broad spectrum of views can be canvassed. We hope GBs will want to work alongside us to design the best solution for their LLC.

3. What is the picture now for Cranbrook and the implications for other school building?

VE: In view of the seriousness of the contraction of house building we have made a working assumption that Clyst Vale Community College will not move from its present site for 8 to 10 years. We are discussing with the school a development plan that will enable us to target appropriate investment, so that the school is not blighted. The timescale for the new building to house Cyst Honiton (Primary) is a matter of conjecture at present but we are working with the District Council and SWERDA to try and tease out the most likely scenario. We know that central government is trying very hard to bring confidence to the construction industry and that banks and large construction companies perceive public sector infrastructure as being the one safe place to be. We hope this will allow us not only to deliver the planned three-year capital programme but also to develop and deliver our BSF plans. Since the round of area meetings, LA members have agreed that Devon shall submit an Expression of Interest to join the BSF programme. This deadline is 30th November and we expect an announcement in February 2009. It has been agreed that we should not seek immediate capital funding as there is a considerable amount of work to do before we can demonstrate a "readiness to deliver". In our submission we shall therefore be setting out our preferred timetable for investment – this may well be for 2012/13.

8. Job Evaluation The appeals' process for Clerks is being dealt with as a group appeal. The procedure allows for a maximum of 3 representatives for the appellants in group appeals. The appeals are taken forward, based on information provided by all appellants and co-ordinated by three representative appellants. Clerks have nominated and voted for three Clerks to represent the 70 or so Clerks who appealed following the JE Review that took place last year. JE assisted in this exercise but did not select the three.

The three have already met with the JE Team to further understand and discuss their role in the JE appeals' process. They are in contact with all appellants, to determine individuals' rationale for appeals and to establish whether one or several appeal meetings will be required. They have full access to copies of all the original JE questionnaires, as completed by Clerks to Governors. They are also contacting Clerks who have not yet returned outstanding paperwork. Before any Informal Appeal meetings are set up, the representatives will meet again with the JE Team. The JE Team will work jointly with the representatives to analyse the evidence being presented by appellants and provide advice on procedure, setting up meetings, etc. All appeals require contribution from

managers - an Informal Appeal might require attendance from a representative manager or managers, depending on the number of appellants being represented at an Informal Appeal Meeting. In the case of schools, the managers originally involved in completion and sign-off of the Clerks' JE questionnaires were usually HTs, bursars or admin officers. The JE Team will administer the process with the intention of minimising the work to be done by the representatives.

3 Chairs have offered to help the process by assisting the appeals as generic Line Managers. Should any other CoGs be interested in discharging this responsibility please let David Tall know as early as possible.

Feedback from Governors in some learning communities is telling the JE Team that they would like to have more information. Members of the JE team could offer to attend any future Governor meetings, where possible, if that is felt to be useful. If governors feel this would be of benefit in their learning community or if they have any questions to feedback please contact sharon.samuel@devon.gov.uk

Governor comment

- *The clerk role has been downgraded under JE from Point 17 – Point 11 which is definitely not good for motivation. Unless this original downgrading can be successfully challenged there is a real danger that GBs will lose really good Clerks when the 3 year period is up that keeps their pay as it was. The drop in pay will affect recruitment and retention*
- *Such things as IT skills, knowledge of the Guide to the Law and anti-socials hours have not been taken into consideration. The responsibility of the job needs to be emphasized – ie Clerks giving unsound advice could have serious results*
- *If the final outcome is not good, one way round it might be for GBs to increase the hours for which they pay their Clerk*
- *In DAG's view it is not a good idea to go down the route of creating different grades for Clerks. Individual GBs should ensure that their Clerk is providing a rounded and informative service and that they attend training. This issue was also raised by David Tall at the recent NGA SW Regional Meeting and NONE of the 7 Associations represented, supported any grading system*
- *Governors present were invited to consider 4 role descriptors and consider which one was closest to the role their Clerk SHOULD be undertaking. They should then email their response to David Tall*

Governor questions

1. **What has happened to JE for others as this seems to be dragging on? Can any pressure be applied?**

SCHOOLS JOB EVALUATION/EQUAL PAY MONITORING GROUP UPDATE NOVEMBER 2008

WHERE ARE WE GOING NEXT?

The JE team is contacting schools now to confirm dates for Informal Appeal meetings. The responsibility for managing schools' appeals will be allocated between five JE analysts, on a Learning Community basis, and will be co-ordinated by Sharon Samuel. Analysts will deal directly with the head teacher/nominated JE contact to clarify process and provide optimum support to appellants and managers in advance of appeal meetings.

Schools have also been proactive in contacting the JE team to arrange appeals meetings.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO/PREPARE FOR NOW

Head Teachers/Managers

- Have received/will receive a list of appellants plus copies of appellants' supporting information and relevant JE questionnaires
- Should review appeals documents to consider support or otherwise of appeals submission, in order to discuss at Informal Appeal Meeting
- Contact JE analyst if further clarification/paperwork is required

Appellants

- Have provided Appeal Information Forms and supporting statements regarding reasons for appeal
- Have been provided with copies of relevant JE questionnaires where requested

Managers and appellants should prepare to work jointly on appeals submissions – and any further written evidence should be provided to the JE team 5 working days in advance of the meeting. All evidence will be fully discussed at

the meeting, so there is ample opportunity to provide advice and recommendations on the content. The evaluation of appeals evidence takes place at a later date and will be assessed by an appeals panel.

TRADE UNIONS

The Job Evaluation Team is also working closely with Trade Union representatives to support effective co-ordination of JE appeal meetings where appellants require trade union support.

STATISTICS

- 60 jobs
- 160 schools
- 90 schools with 1 appellant

SPECIAL SCHOOLS

- A priority for this group of schools is to review the role of Teaching Assistants working in the special school environment. The JE Appeals process will accommodate appeals relating to specific areas, either individually or in groups. Therefore, the JE team will work closely with SHAD to co-ordinate these appeals.

PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS

- It is acknowledged that PRUs reflect a unique balance of working within schools, while being managed under the auspices of the CYPS directorate. The JE team has met with PRU managers and appeals for PRU staff are under way.

GOVERNORS – GLPC TRAINING

- 22 school governors have been trained as GLPC Job Evaluation panellists. It is anticipated that their panel commitments will increase from December onwards, due to the flow of evaluation documents arising from appeal meetings in October and November.

LEARNING COMMUNITY POSITION

- There are a significant number of schools where only one appeal has arisen. One proposal is that, where practical, and in agreement with the schools concerned, appeals are held at a jointly agreed date and venue. This could be facilitated with the support of Learning Community secretaries. It is also acknowledged that some schools may prefer to hold meetings independently and this can be accommodated.

JE PAY PROTECTION PERIOD

- This is a three year protection period which commenced on the JE Implementation date of 1 April 2007 and runs up to and including **31 March 2010**. This statement is included because the JE team is aware of incorrect advice, which has recently been provided from other quarters, that JE pay protection runs out on 31st March 2009 – this is inaccurate information.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Respective responsibility for JE related costs is as follows:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| • Equal Pay Compensation | 1 April 2000 to 31 March 2006 | Devon County Council |
| • Arrears of Pay | 1 April 2006 to 31 March 2007 | Devon County Council |
| • Upgrade/Arrears of Pay | 1 April 2007 onwards | School |

Please be aware that the outcome for some appellants may also cover other staff in the same job, who did not appeal. This aspect is relevant for budget planning in conjunction with school finance officers.

VA SCHOOLS

- many VA schools have decided to adopt the Equal Pay Review and have notified their staff to roles and grades in the DCC pay and grading structure. In doing so, some VA schools sought and obtained advice from the JE

team on fitting staff to roles. However, the JE team will not be involved in any JE appeals that arise in VA schools.

REPS ON THE SCHOOLS' JE/EQUAL PAY GROUP

Please note the membership of this group, as follows:

➤	Judith Johnson	Director for Learning and Schools
➤	Richard Haigh	Devon Secondary Schools' rep
➤	Keith Bennett	Devon Special Schools' rep
➤	Gary Chown	Devon Primary Schools' rep
➤	David Tall	Devon Association of Governors
➤	Sue Mayes	HR Manager – Strategic Services
➤	Janet Marcol	Employee Reward Team Manager
➤	Shirley-Anne Ludley	Unison Schools Rep/Convenor
➤	Andy Turner	GMB Rep/Convenor

9. Financial issues – are there problems looming over budgets?

Governor comment

- *By no means all schools were experiencing difficulties at the moment but problems raised included fuel bills, tight budgets and falling rolls*
- *One governor felt that budgets bear little relation to reality, especially over soaring utility bills (a potential doubling over the next 12 months?)*
- *There was some concern expressed at one meeting about the level of service being received from an individual Finance Officer – however, most schools were pleased with the provision*
- *There was interest in the f40 Group (the 40 lowest funded LAs in the country). Devon (146th out of 150) has rejoined and the Devon Education Forum is looking at ways of pressing the case again for fairer funding. Information from f40 will be placed on the DAG website*

Governor questions

1. What can be done to ensure greater consistency of provision amongst Finance Officers?

Dave Richards: We take any complaints very seriously. Each one is investigated in accordance with our published complaint procedure. If any evidence exists of poor or unacceptable performance this is addressed immediately. If an individual school has concerns about their finance officer and does not want to make a formal complaint but wishes to raise any issue, it is welcome to speak to me or the Schools' Finance Team Manager, Caroline Armstrong, (01392 382318) on an informal basis. Indeed if a school wishes, we can agree to change the finance officer that works with a particular school. Whilst this may be rare it is something we always consider. To make sure every finance officer is aware of the latest developments a weekly communication is sent out detailing the latest information that impacts on the schools finances.

In order to ensure acceptable performance each finance officer has an annual appraisal and a six monthly review to address performance and training needs. Any action such as training is put in place as soon as possible.

Finance Officers usually meet twice a term so they can be kept up-to-date on the latest happenings and discuss areas that need addressing. This allows us to help each finance officer continue their professional development.

10. Safer Recruitment The mandatory requirement for at least one member of a recruitment panel to be trained in Safer Recruitment is now projected to be from Sept. 2009. It is strongly recommended that a nominated governor undertake this training a.s.a.p. to help to ensure the safety of the children and young people in school. It is also strongly recommended that all schools nominate a Governor with responsibility for Child Protection in their school as part of their Safeguarding duty. Should this nominated governor or CoG need to contact The Education Welfare team the named person is Beverley Dubash, Redworth House, Ashburton, Totnes TQ9 5JZ 01392 386821

Governor questions

1. Should more than one person in a GB undertake the training?

David Tall: DAG would always recommend such coverage to ensure constant cover and to develop succession planning.

Clare Sellick (Personnel Officer): The link for the NCSL safer recruitment on-line training website is: <http://www.ncsl.org.uk/safer-recruitment-index>. A further Safer Recruitment and Managing Allegations training event will be taking place on 2nd March 2009 in Exeter. Contact clare.sellick@devon.gov.uk for further information and an application form.

Beverly Dubash (Principal Education Welfare Officer): The DCSF does not require the GB to nominate a Child Protection governor (the whole GB can share the responsibility) but in practice this is probably better than the whole GB taking responsibility as the danger with this approach is that nobody actually takes responsibility for monitoring the schools' practice ... and, where necessary, challenging it.

11. Governing Body Procedures The following issues were raised and discussed at individual meetings by governors

1. What are views on holding open or closed governor meetings?

At meetings: Most GBs hold meetings that are open to the public, given that there is the option of moving to Part Two items when there are any confidential or sensitive issues

2. What are views about a governor being elected Chair of the PTA? Does this lead to a conflict of interests?

At meetings: There was no concern here – see Code of Practice, Roles and Responsibilities in Guide to the Law

3. How do PTAs fit in with GBs? If a GB is not happy with what a PTA is doing how should it deal with this? Should GBs be informed of how funds raised by PTA are spent? What power does a GB have over the spending of PTA funds?

At meetings: Many governors had no problems in relationships with their PTA. It was felt that the HT is ultimately responsible and should seek to ensure that the GB and PTA are working in harmony. The PTA needs to know what the strategic needs of the school are. Governors can be invited to attend PTA meetings sometimes and vice versa ... and often there are governors who are also members of the PTA.

David Tall: I have experience of 2 PTAs but a total of 5 PTA Chairs. 4 of the Chairs were insistent on being independent from, but supportive of, Governors and shared the vision of how to take the school forward.

The onus on bridge building / relationship development rests, I believe, with the GB. At my 2 schools at least one, and hopefully a number of governors, physically attend to support each PTA activity. Regular reference is made to PTA activities in the Governors' meeting and the CoG (ideally) meets the PTA Chair each term. A governor, preferably the CoG, attends the PTA AGM. In both schools I have had, but not currently, a governor appointed who is also a PTA Committee member. They were elected / appointed with no formal recognition of their PTA status, though it clearly added value to their contribution. Parents can be understandably protective of their work, but must be encouraged to understand what the GB is trying to achieve. Often parents are only on the PTA whilst their children are on roll. There may be merit in a more strategic approach by seeing whether the PTA can be expanded into a Friends' group, which could involve the Community and assist a more long term focus.

Jane Lucas (Senior Governor Development Officer, Governor Support): I am not sure I would agree with the comment made at meetings that the HT is ultimately accountable for ensuring good relations between the GB and the PTA. I think it is incumbent on all concerned to work in a way that acknowledges a shared common goal. I am not sure that one individual can be held accountable for this although any single individual can certainly disrupt it!

12. NGA request for feedback about Teachers' TV

In response to the questions below governors present gave the following responses:

1. Do you watch Teachers TV?

At meetings: Numbers varied but probably about ¼ of those attending had watched Teachers' TV with staff governors being those most likely to watch. In some remote areas it was still not possible to access the channels. A few GBs had used programmes for whole GB training

2. How are the programmes watched (e.g. TV or internet)?

At meetings: Roughly 50/50. Many others were unaware the programmes could be accessed on the internet

3. What are the best qualities of the programmes?

At meetings: Ability for relevant clips to be used for training

4. How could the programmes be improved?

At meetings: Greatest problem seemed to be the lack of awareness of times / channels for the programmes

5. Do teachers with whom you have contact watch Teachers TV?

At meetings: Some!

Governor questions

1. How can governors find out more about Teachers' TV?

Ivan Godfrey: The daily schedule for programmes can be found at <http://www.teachers.tv/schedule/daily/> . Within the video section for governors (<http://www.teachers.tv/video/browser/508>) you will find a whole range of programmes targeted at governors almost all of which can be watched online.

SECTION B: Issues offering just Governor Feedback Comments	
1. Assessment for Learning – Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP)	6. Extended Services in and Around Schools (ESS) Capital Funding
2. Single Point of Entry (SPE) Consultation	7. NGA Membership
3. Boundary Committee Review	8. Consultation on changes to governance
4. Teaching, Clerk and Governor Awards	9. Two further comments
5. FMSiS Standard Achievements	

13. Assessment for Learning - Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) This is a new set of materials introduced by the Primary National Strategy to support teachers in making accurate assessments against National Curriculum Levels. Governors may wish to discuss with HTs the progress their school is making in introducing these materials. Governors can find more information at <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/>

Governor comment

- *Most governors were aware of this pilot scheme which is at present working through a maximum of 6 pupils per class*
- *One governor commented that it seemed to be a lot of additional work*
- *Another governor responded that it shouldn't be because it should be looking at work children were already doing and that it was a good initiative as the outcomes will be more standardised*
- *Governors were advised to be aware of it and also to be aware of the possible additional pressure on staff.*
- *A copy of the House of Commons Testing & Assessment Report is on the DAG website. It makes good reading for those who question the narrow focus of some of the current procedures*

Ivan Godfrey: This was, no doubt, one of the main reasons why the government has decided to abandon KS3 SATs for 14-year olds!

14. Single Point of Entry (SPE) Consultation is taking place with parents, schools, pre-schools and all interested bodies on whether DCC schools should move to a single point of entry for Reception classes. All schools will be welcome to contribute their views and LLCs may also wish to comment. Information and a brief questionnaire will be made available online and via the My Devon call centre. The closing date for responses will be the end of November. Any way to raise the profile and increase the numbers of responses from parents would be invaluable. Further details andrew.brent@devon.gov.uk

Governor comment

- *Governors at the 2 meetings where the issue was raised were not in favour of this proposal*
- Lisa Boon (Schools Access Services Manager):** I have passed the comment above on to Andrew Brent, the CYPs Policy Officer who is leading on this piece of work. It is important that Governors - whether supportive or not of SPE - also make a response to the consultation via the publicised channels by emailing onepointentrymailbox@devon.gov.uk or writing to Andrew Brent at County Hall. This will ensure we receive views from all interested parties which will help to shape how we take this forward. Relevant information can be found at <http://www.dag.gb.com/pointsofentryconsultation.htm>.

15. Boundary Committee Review The Boundary Committee 12-week public consultation ended on September 26. DAG had provided some questions and comments for GBs to consider when making their contribution to the consultation and urged all GBs to have their say on this most important issue.

Governor comment

- *Some schools had passed comments to the Boundary Committee*
- *Virtually all who commented felt that the dual unitary system would disadvantage rural schools*
- *The majority favoured the maintenance of the current system*
- *A final decision will be made in February 09 for ratification in Parliament with a view to implementation in 2010. The forthcoming General Election might affect all of this*
- *It will still be possible to lobby the Minister of State after the Boundary Committee have made their decision*

16. Teaching, Clerk and Governor Awards Congratulations to all local nominees at the annual Teaching Awards and especially to Paul Adams, governor of Okehampton College, for receiving a distinction in the South West Governor of the Year Award. All winners can be viewed at www.teachingawards.com where there are also details of how to nominate governors and staff for next years' awards. This is a very positive process for all involved. NGA operates an ' Outstanding Clerk of the Year Award 2009 ' - a prestigious award that has been offered bi-annually since 2003. The Award has done much to raise the profile of GB clerks. It will be part of an expanded NGA Awards event as, for the first time, there will be three awards for GBs which have excelled in dealing with issues in the following categories: challenging circumstances, support for governance and exceptional projects. The NGA Awards recognise the huge commitment made to schools by governors and GBs. DCSF has also recognised that commitment with financial support for the 2009 Awards. Paper copies of both nomination forms can be obtained from NGA HQ. Information is also on the DAG and NGA websites. Completed nomination forms for clerks should be returned to the NGA HQ by 5th December and for the GB awards by 12th December 2008.

Governor comment

- *There is also a Bursar's Award but this is often not publicised enough with, therefore, a poor response!*

David Tall: DAG has been very keen to support clerks over recent years as, without their support and commitment, many GBs would struggle to balance the range of demands placed upon GBs. Do consider putting your clerk forward for this award if you believe (s)he does a job worthy of such recognition.

17. FMSiS Standard achievements The Audit Team is always looking for ways to help schools. This needs to be done on an individual basis where schools ask what they need. There will be some training on risk management in the very near future which will help regarding the statement of internal control. The website offers much guidance and model answers as well as responses to FAQs (http://www.devon.gov.uk/audit_inspection.htm). Audit bulletins have been issued to schools for update information. Apart from a course on January 14th 2009 organised by DGS, no further FMSiS training is planned for the moment.

Governor comment

- *Governors who had attended training and / or gone through the process were generally positive about FMSiS.*
- *One school commented that the exercise made GBs think about what they know and do not know. Others considered it a useful piece of self analysis*

18. Extended Services in and around Schools (ESS) capital funding The DCSF has announced a three year Extended Schools capital allocation to develop extended schools across an area to support delivery of the core offer. The first year allocation is £1.183m. Schools have the opportunity to bid for funding towards capital projects, on the basis that they will also make a contribution. The form is available at <http://www.devon.gov.uk/capital-grant-funding-request.doc> - further details in gold sheet dated Sept. 2nd.

Alice McShane is in the process of organising LLC based training for governors on extended services. This training is fully funded at present and at no cost to schools. Dates for this term and early next term are:

- 15th Nov. - Axe Valley, Honiton, Sidmouth LLCs - Axe Valley Community College - full day
 - 18th + 25th Nov. - Braunton, Ilfracombe LLCs - Braunton Community College - two evening sessions
 - 27th Jan. - Okehampton, Holsworthy, Tavistock LLCs - Okehampton College - full day
- This training will be rolled out to other LLCs in the near future.

Governor comment

- *Hardly anyone has put in a bid for the ESS funding – now is a good time to put in a bid!*

19. NGA membership Although all GBs affiliated to DAG are basic members of NGA, individual GBs are encouraged to consider taking out full standard NGA membership in order to enjoy all the benefits of the organisation such as

- Copies of the NGA magazine delivered to the home address of three members of GB and one to the school (additional copies delivered to the school address for other members of GB if requested)
- Members' log-in access to the members' area of the NGA website. The members* area includes back-copies of the NGA magazine and the full text of other NGA publications.
- Discounts off other NGA publications such as 'Welcome to Governance'.
- Three free places at NGA conferences

The brand new NGA magazine, in full colour, was launched in April. It has 32 pages of information, guidance and comment. As part of the reformed NGA membership package the magazine is sent direct to members' homes, cutting distribution costs considerably, and also saving on paper and wastage. DAG has negotiated an initial reduction in the standard membership fee of £50 for the current year only.

Governor comment

- *NGA standard membership is evidence to OfSTED that GBs are receiving up to date information*
- *The NGA's School Governors' Year Book is highly recommended*

20. Consultation on changes to governance Although this is yet to be published governor views were sought on the following questions:

- thinking about the size of your current GB, would you want a reduction in the number of governors?
- are you in favour of mandatory training for governors?

Governor comment

- *With regard to the issue of size it is believed that the government is having second thoughts about reducing the size of GBs significantly. UNITE has a group discussing changes to governance with the possibility of 9 – 15 people on a GB likely to be the recommendation*
- *At all meetings the overwhelming majority of governors thought mandatory training was essential although one governor objected to the word 'mandatory'. He felt there was a difference between it being a very good idea and mandatory. The following points were also made:*
 - ❖ *You would not do any other responsible job without receiving training*
 - ❖ *Potential governors should be told about the training before they agree to take on the role*
 - ❖ *People without the time or intention to attend training should not put themselves forward for the role*

- ❖ *Governors have a duty to do the job properly - this requires a bit of effort! What use is a governor turning up at meetings who has never received any training and does very little?*
- *There should be special training for staff and teacher governors as it is sometimes necessary to have counselling on how to handle the role*
- *Finally there was a suggestion, welcomed by some, that CoGs and Chairs of Committees should be paid*

21. Two further comments

- *Secondary governors recorded growing frustration at poor quality marking at GCSE and A Level*
- *One governor sought other governor views on education proposals announced at the Conservative party conference. He felt that the suggestion that up to 5,000 new schools would be opened would mean that 5,000 schools would have to be closed and asked how would this be done and at what cost. He was also concerned that the emphasis given to schools' independence would inhibit current steps being undertaken within LLCs for greater levels of co-operation*

C

SECTION C: Additional Issues of Information since the Checklist [new items in red]	
1. Learning Data Sets	5. CTLPIP
2. conflict of Interest	6. Merlin
3. Recent Information from the Devon Association of Governors [DAG]	7. Groupcall
4. Insurance for Governors	

Learning Data Sets

Sue Clarke (Strategic Lead for Achievement through Collaboration): Are governors aware of the new Learning Community data sets? The data is a snapshot (January census) and is based entirely on returns provided by schools themselves. This is the data used by the DCSF to evaluate Devon and therefore we all have a vested interest in making sure it as accurate as possible. Many heads are sharing these data sets with governors as they provide a community wide view of demographics, surplus places, energy spending and a range of performance data benchmarked in three different ways. I believe governors need to see this information as it can be used to inform planning and evaluation processes. In some cases there may be sensitivities about this data, even though it is technically in the public domain. Chairs can check with their own heads and perhaps treat it as a part 2 item.

Conflict of Interest

Jane Lucas (DGS): At the beginning of governor meetings individual governors should indicate whether they have an interest in any particular issue under discussion. Broadly speaking, in this context, it is any situation where any one individual's interest in the outcome of a decision is greater than anyone else's. We have been doing this for about a year on my GB and we ask if anyone has any specific personal interest in any item on the agenda that may conflict with their responsibilities as a governor. This raises an interesting point and one of a number of inherent tensions in the stakeholder model. I guess the role of the parent governor implicitly contains a conflict of interest which needs to be acknowledged and addressed from time to time in general terms. It is important to remind parent governors that they are there as governors to safeguard the interests of all children, not simply their own, and for clear messages to be given to new (and aspiring) parent governors to ensure that, right from the start, they are clear about their role (we make it clear on our induction day). Any person can declare an interest if they think they are unable to be impartial ... so it may be that a parent of a child in a class that stands to be significantly affected by a decision may feel that they cannot act impartially. I think in the end it boils down to good governance and an ability to wear different hats. Some manage it well, others struggle.

Recent Information from the Devon Association of Governors (DAG)

- DAG is now using its website (<http://www.dag.gb.com/>) as its primary method of communications with governors and only uses the EAL Dist system for out of routine matters. A visit to the website every two weeks should keep GBs up to date, but a daily visit would of course be better!! If GBs would like direct communications they should take advantage of the Intermediary Governor scheme. Details of this, and anything else to do with DAG, can be obtained from dmrmtall@mvdartmoor.freeserve.co.uk Please use the discussion board on the website to share views and ideas.
- It has been agreed to welcome all Clerks as interim members of DAG until the constitution can be amended at the next Conference, after which they will become full members. There is no cost for membership!
- DAG representation is sought for
 - substitute primary and secondary governors for the Devon Education Forum (formerly Schools' Forum)
 - a governor from a Community School to sit on the Local Admissions Forum
 - new governor members of the DAG Executive
 For further information about what is involved in any of these roles contact David Tall

- Next year's DAG conference will be held in July and not March.
- From the start of this term the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) for 16 – 18 year olds can be claimed online, phone and application form - see www.direct.gov.uk/ema
- There are almost always live consultations on the DCSF website. Check the NGA Bulletin Boards for current consultations and visit <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations/> if you wish to comment

Insurance for governors In the summer there was some coverage in newspapers and on the BBC website re the need for legal support for GBs. To save you stretching tight budgets even further by taking out some sort of additional insurance, David Tall has found out that DCC provides the following cover for School Governors:

- **Public Liability** This covers any claims made against the Local Authority, the school, its Governors, employees or volunteer helpers by a third party, in respect of any physical injury or damage to property arising as a result of the negligence of any of the above parties. The policy has been specifically extended to cover school Governors, including Governors of aided schools in respect of claims arising out of the use of school premises for educational purposes. Currently the Local Authority provides cover of £50 million for any one incident.
- **Officials & Professional Indemnity** Similar to Public Liability insurance but covering the legal liability of the Local Authority, its employees and Governors for any legal liability to pay compensation for financial loss (as distinct from physical injury or damage) sustained by a third party as a result of negligent advice, acts, errors or omissions on the part of any insured person. Cover in this instance is up to £5 million for any one incident.
- **Libel and Slander** Cover applies to all employees and school Governors in respect of claims made by third parties. Governors are no longer required to make any contribution towards the cost of settlement.
- **Personal Accident – Assault** The Local Authority has taken out a policy providing cover for both employees and Governors who suffer serious assault in the course of their duties. The policy covers death, permanent or partial disablement, loss of limbs or sight. The maximum payable on death or permanent total disablement is £50,000 (or three times annual salary in the case of staff) and this reduces in line with the Standard European Scale, according to the degree of disability.

CTLPIP is a new acronym to enjoy – Children's Trust Local Planning Implementation Partnership. CTLPIPs will become important in the delivery of local services as they represent an inter-agency forum, based in a locality. They are in their infancy at the moment and more developed in some areas than others.

Look out for information coming in to schools about **Merlin**, a SW Grid for Learning initiative which will provide the foundation for school learning platforms in all our schools. Schools that express interest initially are likely to be first in the queue!! For further details go to <http://merlin.swgfl.org.uk> in October or www.swgfl.org.uk now and type in Merlin on the search engine.

DAG has received an advertising circular from **Groupcall**, a parental contact messaging service designed to reduce costs and improve communication to all stakeholders. It provides this service to over 1,000 schools in the UK. It allows schools to send personalised text, voice or email messages instantly to parents, staff or other contacts in various languages for a low subscription fee. Its customer base claims that benefits include:

- Reduction in unauthorised absences (by 27% in some cases)
- Improved attendance
- Communication with parents made easier
- Telephone bills cut by an estimated £800 per year
- Some schools report saving more than two hours a day chasing unauthorised absences

St James School in Exeter has been using Groupcall since May last year and has offered to act as a reference site if you require a customer perspective. Alternatively visit the web site: <http://www.groupcall.co.uk>

Ivan Godfrey 07.11.08