

# Devon Association of Governors

## Issues raised at Area Governor Meetings Spring 2009

This report is a summary of points raised by governors at the Area Meetings held earlier this term in the following Local Learning Communities:-

Chulmleigh, Crediton and South Molton  
 Barnstaple, Braunton, Bideford, Ilfracombe and Torrington  
 Dartmouth, Ivybridge, Kingsbridge, South Dartmoor and Totnes  
 Clyst Vale and Exeter

These meetings were attended by well over 100 governors, clerks and headteachers from 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 website: [www.devon.gov.uk/governors](http://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 governor questions with responses in blue ( where received ) from the LA, NGA and others**

This is a very detailed report which will almost certainly have items of immediate relevance to your school / GB.

Section **A** offers answers to questions that may have been concerning your GB

Sections **A + B** provide insight in to what fellow governors are thinking about topics of current concern

Section **C** adds additional key information since the Checklist was published

**Please share this report with your GB, in particular committee chairs.**

**Just as this document is being finalised, news has come through of Devon's 4-star excellence rating from the Audit Commission. In adding our congratulations to the Local Authority it is worth putting on record our thanks to LA officers for the speed and thoroughness with which they regularly respond to issues raised by governors through these meetings.**

Ivan Godfrey  
 David Tall ( DAG Executive Officer )  
 DAG website

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[www.dag.gb.com](http://www.dag.gb.com)

### List of main items

#### Section A ( pages 2 – 14 )

Financial Issues Federation and Partnership Health & Safety Overview Training / DGS Issues School Report Cards Personnel Issues	Primary Capital Programme + Area Reviews Extended Services / Community Cohesion Single Point of Entry / Admissions Communication with Governors Safer Recruitment Personal Education Plans for CiC
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#### Section B ( pages 15 – 16 )

GB Procedures A range of other topics	School Meals
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#### Section C ( pages 17 – 19 )

Unitary Status Baby P Issues DAG Conference A range of other topics	Revised CRB Disclosure Policy 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Schools Volunteer Governor Representatives
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There is also a list of useful documents for GBs at the end of the document on page 19

## A Issues seeking Feedback from LA Officers, DAG and NGA

**1. Financial Issues** After many years of considerable investment in education and a very high level of capital spending there had already been an indication of a marked slowdown in increase to spending levels before the current economic problems emerged. Governors were informed that:

- Currently Devon is 146<sup>th</sup> out of 149 in the national table of funding levels per pupil. Historically Devon has always been towards the bottom of the funding table regardless of the party in power nationally. According to statistics presented in parliament on January 26<sup>th</sup> pupils in England are funded on average £4,690 per year. In Devon pupils receive £4,280, i.e. **£410 per pupil per year less than the national average**. The Devon Education Forum ( DEF ) is working together with the LA as a member of the f40 group to produce a robust case for changes to the Dedicated School Grant ( DSG ) funding formula when it is amended during 2010 to ensure that Devon gains a fairer share of national education funding for the 3-year budget period 2011 - 2014
- In the context of almost certain tight budgets in coming years DEF has set up a small group of senior HTs, governors, councillors and officers to look at education provision within Devon and consider ways in which it might be delivered more effectively and efficiently. A second group has also been established to review the rapidly rising statementing budget and to identify ways in which these increases can be halted
- John Barnard sent a letter to all schools “ Working together to increase funding for Devon schools “ ( see <http://www.devon.gov.uk/sc-dec0838024.pdf> ). At all meetings copies of the letter were circulated. Schools are asked to ensure that, in line with the request from DEF on November 26<sup>th</sup>, they have:
  - followed the procedure to avoid their year end balance being capped
  - submitted a copy of their updated three year budget plan so as to provide an indication of the relative proportion of schools forecasting a difficulty in balancing the budget for the next two years
  - provided some evidence ( or a well argued case ) of the impact of additional funding on standards and outcomes for children were Devon children to be funded at the level of the national average. Schools were asked to respond to [fineduc@devon.gov.uk](mailto:fineduc@devon.gov.uk) with their own examples of the real impact that low funding levels have on standards in their school ( including reference to the DSG Formula Review in the title )
- At the same time there are a number of ways Devon can strengthen its case to DCSF for higher funding by providing evidence that we have made every effort to improve efficiency and value for money such as:
  - Achievement of the Financial Management Standard in Schools ( FMSiS ) where we are not currently meeting the target in terms of the proportion of schools achieving FMSiS over the three years since it was introduced ( see article from audit team in this term’s Devon Governor )
  - Showing we have taken external advice such as the offer of one day’s free value for money consultancy available via <http://schools.tribalavail.co.uk/vfm/index.html> ( When Devon was recently visited by audit commission representatives they were keen to know how many schools had taken up this offer and the answer at the time was only one )
  - Following up suggestions already shared with bursar groups which encourage such practice as the use of framework contracts + the administrative savings offered by the "One bill" approach
  - Taking advantage of the LA challenge fund for schools to encourage the reduction of heat loss and resultant energy and cost savings ( the LA will provide 50% of the funding with the remaining 50% from the school ). Energy costs are extremely high in some schools. A sum for this "Green Challenge" has already been set aside in the capital programme for 2008/9 and the LA has also secured half of the Investing in Devon "Green Fund". In addition they are intending to allocate a sum from the 2009/10 capital programme to offer match funding towards the installation of smart metering. All these funds will have the potential to assist schools in a) identifying energy issues and b) resolving some of them. As yet the methodology for assessment of bids has still to be finalised but it is expected that it would link to obvious improvements indicated by Display Energy Certificates or the accompanying report. If schools have commissioned their own Energy Performance audit that would be a very credible source of data too. Final arrangements for informing schools of detail of these issues are in the process of being discussed – contact person is [vic.ebdon@devon.gov.uk](mailto:vic.ebdon@devon.gov.uk)

### Governor comment

- *In responding to the questions asked by DEF many governors felt that it would be important to stress how schools would utilise the extra money per pupil to improve teaching and learning*
- *Devon needs to prove it is not particularly well off as a county. One Governor remarked that it was highly likely that the level of public funding will decline therefore it is important to get Devon’s funding level up to the average now. It was felt that cultural and rural deprivation has not been recognised in Devon’s case.*
- *It will be important to involve parents in any campaign – but there is a real need to avoid being emotive. There have been cases where emotion rather than fact has been used to press an argument and this has backfired. Hence the real importance of schools providing clear information about actual hardship.*

- *Transport funding continues to be an issue in Devon with rural transport costs taking up a disproportionate share of money that could be used for children's education in Devon. Some governors commented that the closure of small schools would result in more children being transported greater distances. It was clarified that the LA pays if a child has been sent to a school over 2 miles away from their home ( primary ) and 3 miles ( secondary ) but if a child attends a school over 2 / 3 miles away because of parental choice then the parents fund the cost of travel.*
  - *Concerns were expressed that statement funding provision only exists now for pupils requiring point 6 or more per week time support. Governors were assured that there is still money put in school budgets for other SEN pupils. It had been anticipated that SEN costs would stabilise or possibly decline as a result of these measures but in Devon they seem to be increasing ( hence the DEF small group to look at issues re provision of SEN Devon ).*
  - *At one meeting some governors felt very strongly that FMSiS was a big headache for governors and that the LA and central government should bear in mind that governors are volunteers*
  - *A number of issues were raised about utilities:*
    - ❖ *If you ring DCC for forecast figures for utilities you won't get an answer because the current contract doesn't end until the end of June 2009. There was surprise that the LA had not got this in line for 31<sup>st</sup> March when the water rates will change.*
    - ❖ *Water saving is not feasible because of the legionella issue when schools are unoccupied during the holidays – loos need flushing etc.*
    - ❖ *Governors were advised to contact the LA before approaching individual companies to undertake work.*
    - ❖ *Energy saving is an expensive issue for small schools*
- JJ:** This is just one of the reasons why schools should look at LLC wide procurement solutions

#### Governor questions

**1. Why does Devon get so much less per pupil? Is it politics? Is it preconceptions about quality of life in Devon?**

**John Barnard** ( Head of Resource Strategies, CYPS ): Mainly it is because Devon has very low scores on the current deprivation indicators used by DCSF and this factor generates considerable funding. Also, Devon does not receive Area Cost Adjustment funding as an Authority that is in or near London

**2. How can parents become involved in stating a case for Devon?**

**JB:** In March, DEF plan to adopt a strategy for making its case over the next 18 months involving schools, parents, and the County Council. A letter will be sent to all schools and CoGs following the meeting on 18 March

**3. What have been the results of previous lobbying attempts?**

**JB:** Not significant success, despite making the case personally to Tony Blair on the steps of 10 Downing Street in 2003

**4. With the number of statements increasing is the funding keeping in line with this?**

**JB:** Yes, although this cannot continue as it has led to an overspend expected on the 2009/10 Dedicated Schools Grant ( the grant that funds schools ) of £1.3 million. A task Group is being set up to consider how spend can be reduced

**5. Can FMSiS documents and training be expressed in plain English?!**

**JB:** A number of training events have been offered to schools and Governors that have proved very popular and School Finance Officers and School Auditors are happy to advise when on their visits. We note and will reflect on the request for plain English in FMSiS papers when considering any changes to the documentation – though we cannot change language where it is part of the Standard itself.

**6. How do schools set about getting quotes / grants for solar panels? Which companies should schools use to do the water testing?**

**JB:** Advice is available from NPS, the Authority's property experts ( see item 26 - [chris.jay@nps-sw.co.uk](mailto:chris.jay@nps-sw.co.uk) )

**7. What is happening about Job Evaluation as some schools are carrying money forward to cover the possible success of JE appeals?**

**JB:** Appeals are now being heard but there is a back log. It is hoped that these will all be heard by the end of 2009

**2. The Primary Capital Programme and the Individual School Review Process** Devon's Primary Capital Programme 'Strategy for Change' has been approved by the DCSF with positive feedback for Devon's proposed approach. Key extracts from a letter sent by Judith Johnson w/e Jan 6<sup>th</sup>, updated Jan. 13<sup>th</sup> are given below ( full version can be found at <http://www.devon.gov.uk/sc-dec0838029.pdf> )

**Judith Johnson:** The DCSF approval of our PCP 'Strategy for Change' heralds the immediate start of a significant change programme to review systematically school place provision by learning community through Area Reviews. The PCP will apply agreed criteria to review current patterns of schooling, target long term investment and bring

about system-wide change that supports twenty first century learning. Outcomes from each Area Review will prompt local conversations, and sometimes formal consultations, about where investment is needed most. In addition to the Area Review process there will, in specific circumstances, be the need to undertake reviews of individual schools when two or more critical factors collide. A link provides further detail about the Individual School Review Process and the ways that schools themselves will be involved. The link notes triggers for an individual review and outlines the process and steps to be undertaken, should this type of review be required. Individual School Review Process <http://www.devon.gov.uk/individual-school-reviews-chart.pdf>

Critical factors that may trigger an Individual Review are those that have the potential to weaken significantly a school's capacity to deliver an effective quality of education for its learners including the capacity to improve. These include:

- Leadership recruitment issues
- Recurring financial concerns
- Significant issues with accommodation
- Long term demographic contextual changes
- Loss of parental confidence
- An unfavourable Ofsted Inspection
- Significant and rapid changes in the numbers on roll
- Where surplus places exceed 25%

It is important that any review of an individual school is robust but also transparent so that schools can be fully informed and actively engaged in the process.

I am highlighting these processes so that all schools are fully aware of both the Area Review Programme and (if required) Individual School Reviews. These will now be part of Devon's ongoing policy and practice.

I also want to reiterate that Devon remains strongly committed to ensuring that schools, communities and the Dioceses are actively involved in this significant change process. Partnership and participation are key elements because we all share responsibility for ensuring the best possible learning conditions and outcomes for the children and young people of this county. If a school wants to precipitate a review because of specific contextual factors that mean they would want to be considered sooner rather than later they should put this request in writing from their Chair of Governors to Judith Johnson, Debbie Clapshaw and Vic Ebdon inviting key officers to meet with the Headteacher and Chair of Governors and outlining the 2/3 key drivers for initiating the request.

**Vic Ebdon** ( Head of Strategic Planning ): The Strategic Planning Group ( old Capital Strategy ) will have to focus our efforts on delivery of the agreed capital programme ... and that is only likely to grow in scale without any promise of extra resources. The huge demands placed on us by these initiatives mean that we may have to reduce the level of support we can provide to schools for their "own initiative" capital projects as we simply will not have the resources to continue with the kind of interactions that have prevailed for some years. In addition the LA would not wish schools to be undertaking works that might not fit in to the strategic framework for a school's development. Schools that want to explore own initiative schemes or require advice in respect of maintenance, boundary issue with neighbours, insurance matters, Devon Maintenance Partnership etc, will be directed to NPS who will be able ( and willing ) to provide them with quotes for professional advice and guidance. We are very conscious that this may not be welcome to some schools but approved capital expenditure programme has to take precedence.

#### *Governor comment*

- *A number of governors were pleased to be made aware of the implications of the above and felt it very important that governors began to consider these issues*
  - *Some governors felt these moves could lead to a loss of emphasis on the local community school*
  - *Concerns expressed under item 4 below about PFI provision and Extended Services need to be considered to ensure implications are fully understood and acted upon*
  - *Some expressed concern that the present economic climate would mean that this would not happen : others that the Government would look to bring forward plans to keep people in work*
  - *One governor on an LA committee informed others that money for Building Schools for the Future was going to poorly performing schools first. Falling rolls would also be looked at as falling rolls = non investment*
  - *There are additional grants available for schools pursuing renewable energy*
  - *Some governors will want to be involved in designs for new buildings*
  - *In the Broadclyst area there were major concerns about Planned Admission Numbers ( PANs ) for Clyst Vale CC and Broadclyst Primary now that plans for Cranbrook have been shelved. It was felt that Cranbrook was being used as an excuse by the LA to discourage parents in Exeter from choosing schools outside Exeter*
- Judith Johnson:** CYPS absolutely refute this implication and believe in the value of parental preference, balanced with effective local schools for local children. This ensures coherent county wide planning and optimal value for money from the education system so that all schools can benefit from the limited resources available

#### **Governor questions**

**1. How much will the recession impact on these plans?**

Answer to follow

**2. Is funding being fairly distributed between North and South Devon schools?**

Answer to follow

**3. Are there implications for Extended Services?**

Answer to follow

**4. Who will pay for Architectural Services?**

Answer to follow

**3. Federation and Partnership** A number of Devon governors attended the DCSF regional conferences on Federation held in Bristol on 29<sup>th</sup> January. Presentations from all speakers and the Federations video are now available via a link on the DAG website or by using the following link: [www.livegroup.co.uk/federationsconference](http://www.livegroup.co.uk/federationsconference). The 5-minute video is particularly interesting. There are an increasing number of primary schools beginning to take a serious look at federation - and alternative models for school leadership. In addition to the 5 existing federations it is quite likely that another 5 will be up and running by Sept 09. Succession planning needs to be on all GB agendas regardless of where they think they might be on the HT recruitment life cycle!

*Governor comment*

- *There was a lot of interest expressed at all meetings in the prospect of federation although there were a number of new governors unclear about what is involved*
- *At 3 of the 4 meetings governors from federated schools contributed and commented that*
  - ❖ *Within a federation of 3 widely spaced small primaries federation had been a very positive move for all 3 schools. It had saved 2 schools from closure, widened children's social circles and improved the quality of teaching and learning*
  - ❖ *The potential for teaching staff is a driver – federated schools are good for staff development, good for opportunities and as a result the number of good quality applications for federated schools has shot up. They attract young, ambitious, better calibre staff with a wide range of talents to distribute around the schools*
  - ❖ *There is more flexibility with regard to use of teaching staff together with savings made on more co-ordinated use of support staff*
  - ❖ *The roll of governance changes in federated schools. There are often smaller GBs with a more strategic role. A HT governor of one federation involving a primary and secondary school explained that their GB had no committees. The 2 HTs and the lead and deputy lead governor for specific areas ( curriculum / finance ) met on a regular basis. However in the second primary / secondary federation in the county the experience of lead governors was neither successful nor popular and they have reverted to committees. This showed that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to federation*
  - ❖ *Another GB might be asked to assist should the school GB have a grievance issue*
- *A number of governors saw federation only as a means of keeping small schools in villages : others, however, could definitely see advantages for schools of all sizes*
- *Some felt schools should 'jump before they are pushed' because at some time in the future federation could become national policy.*
- *The value of working within LLCs was emphasised on numerous occasions. In one area there is to be a whole LLC meeting soon regarding linked working within and across LLCs. Another LLC has used the learning data sets produced by the LA to develop LLC plans*
- *Some governors considered Trusts offered another way forward as they bring in businesses and involve pre-schools. Governors within the Kingsbridge LLC were meeting regularly with a view to building up a Trust. Totnes was planning a similar meeting in the near future.*
- *Mention was also made of Management Partnerships. This was considered as a second class arrangement by many parents – their view was that they had an 'absent HT'.*
- *Some governors commented that it would be useful to hear from federations that are up and running and successful. It was pointed out that these opportunities had already been provided. Anyone interested in a visit should contact Sue Clarke ( [sue.clarke@devon.gov.uk](mailto:sue.clarke@devon.gov.uk) )*

**Governor questions**

#### 1. How should schools / LLCs set about exploring this issue without appearing to threaten other schools within their community?

**Sue Clarke** ( Strategic Lead for Achievement through Collaboration ): I hold a register of schools who have formally expressed an interest in federation and are seeking partner schools. However, most federations have emerged from local discussions. Approaching another school can be very sensitive. Often the first step is best taken informally either by the chairs of governors or through the headteachers as this provides the opportunity

for the schools involved to explore gently if federation is right for them at that time. If there is agreement between chairs that federation is an option worth exploring further, then a more formal conversation should quickly develop involving governors and staff. If schools do wish to make their own approaches then we ask that they inform their Diocesan director if appropriate and the Local Authority (via Sue Clarke or Debbie Clapshaw). If governors or heads feel that they would prefer the LA or the diocese to broker or support initial conversations then we are happy to help in any way.

**Ivan Godfrey**: Having attended the Bristol conference and been most impressed by the real advantages linked to federation I personally feel that this is something that all GBs should investigate in principle. In fact looking at the issues involved **before** consideration is given to actual practical links with one or more other schools can remove the sense of one school ' threatening ' another.

**4. Extended Services to Schools ( ESS ) / Community Cohesion** Extended Services are a key way of supporting pupils, parents, carers and local communities. More and more schools are now opening up their facilities outside school hours and as public awareness of 'extended schools' grows, so will interest and demand. By spreading the word about the services they offer, schools are better able to support the needs of children, young people and families in their community. The toolkit at this website -

<http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/00906-2008DOM-EN.pdf> - provides a range of tips and ideas for publicity with examples of what other schools / clusters are doing.

In addition Devon School-Childcare Link Scheme ( **DISC** ), Devon's family information service, is currently involved in a project alongside Devon Early Years and Childcare Service and Devon Extended Services in Schools to help primary and special schools ( with primary age children ) fulfil the childcare element of the Extended Services agenda. DISC currently have three Outreach Workers who are aiming to visit all schools before July 09. Many schools already have Extended Schools' status and the Outreach Workers will be visiting to discuss how the childcare element is going and to provide resources to help. They will be concentrating on one LLC at a time and will be contacting schools ahead to arrange visits. Contact DISC at 0800 056 3666, [discinfo@devon.gov.uk](mailto:discinfo@devon.gov.uk) and/or [www.devon.gov.uk/disc](http://www.devon.gov.uk/disc)

Finally there are updates to the new **Devon Children and Young People's ( Family ) Service Directory**:

- the keyword search has now been improved to work like Google by relevance.
- parent and toddler groups are now in the Directory as well as DISC
- music and movement classes, things to do for parents and their young babies are now on the website
- 20% of uniformed groups in Devon are now on the website • 13 children's centres are currently piloting a system for updating their own records online
- more outdoor pursuit activities are on the system

They are currently working on

- improving information on uniformed groups - scouts, cubs, guides, brownies, army cadets, etc
- extended services around schools
- verifying records - continual process
- changing the name to Devon's Family Service Directory to reflect national changes and systems coming on-board during 2009.

For further information contact 01392 385447, [discinfo@devon.gov.uk](mailto:discinfo@devon.gov.uk) and/or [www.devonfsd.info](http://www.devonfsd.info)

Under the umbrella of **Community Cohesion** there is a role for governors in relating to equality and diversity and the reducing bullying priority of the CYPP.

*Governor comment*

- *It is a great pity that some of the DGS courses on Extended Services in and around schools have been cancelled because of a lack of interest*

**Alice McShane** ( Governor Development Officer, Governor Support ): As organiser for these courses, I agree! ESS training for governors is currently being rolled out across Devon via LLCs. We are planning to run more of these in the future. Those sessions already delivered to governors across Learning Communities have been generally very well received. The training is delivered by Governor Support with input from other officers in the LA. Whilst we will be approaching all LLCs over the next year to offer governor training, LLCs are encouraged to be proactive and secure training for their governors as soon as they would like. To book such training LLCs need to identify a coordinator to liaise with governor support, confirm numbers and organise

catering. There is funding available to cover the cost of catering / venue. Please contact [alice.mcshane@devon.gov.uk](mailto:alice.mcshane@devon.gov.uk) for further details

- Many rural schools are mostly 'sign posting' provision as there is no requirement for these services to be provided within schools. Chulmleigh LLC is using the funding to create a 'sign posting' website for the community and are also distributing sign posting bookmarks when sending out prospectuses
- There is a lot of confusion amongst governors about their role in delivering community cohesion!
- One GB had encountered major problems getting information about employing people to deliver extended services. They felt they had been passed from one department to another when needing to know how to go about paying staff and, for them, the payment issue is not yet resolved. In other areas, however, there was praise for the support system available and advice on who to contact
- At some meetings all present felt their schools were meeting the needs perceived to be 'out there'
- One meeting highlighted grave concerns about PFI schools where out of school activities are run by outside agencies. This has cut across local communities resulting in some providers being excluded from extended services. It was felt that all GBs need to be aware of the implications for the PCP in item 2 above. Moreover, if the Government changes in 2010, schools are even more likely to be run by private companies. Community involvement may alter if there is a commercial imperative. Schools must catalogue issues before entering into new projects. Very important lessons have been learnt from Exeter Secondary and Primary schools and other schools need to learn from this experience. Carillion sets the charge for breakfast clubs and, particularly in poorer areas, this is out of the reach of many parents who cannot afford the cost. It was felt very strongly that this works against the purpose of extended schools policy
- Governors also commented that it had been suggested that Carillion staff are not as strictly CRB'd as others

### Governor questions

#### 1. Why are there 2 separate information sources? Do they duplicate information?!

**Richard Stevens** ( Information & Data Services Manager, CYPS ): This will change!! Currently, the Family Information Service ( DISC ) manage the Family Service Directory ( FSD ) which holds all information relating to services for children, young people and parents / carers other than information relating to Childcare Services. The latter has been held within the national ChildcareLink system. However the DCSF are turning off the ChildcareLink database and are expecting LAs to purchase their own systems from new grant funding. Devon has done this and is using a new system called EVINCE. This is developed by Opportunity Links who created our Family Services Directory. Therefore from the public perspective, the information should be integrated into one system ( the FSD ) within the next few months, as we have received approval to appoint two temporary assistants ( funded by ESS Grant ) to ensure the data is entered.

#### 2. Who are the contacts for Extended Schools across the county?

**AM:** The contacts are as follows:

Exeter Mid & East:	Velda Woodruff	<a href="mailto:velda.woodruff@devon.gov.uk">velda.woodruff@devon.gov.uk</a>	07812 545076
South & West Devon:	Chrissie Hunt	<a href="mailto:chrissie.hunt@devon.gov.uk">chrissie.hunt@devon.gov.uk</a>	07812 545085
North Devon:	Judi Walker	<a href="mailto:judith.walker@devon.gov.uk">judith.walker@devon.gov.uk</a>	07815 784027

#### 3. Is there anywhere governors can access what other schools are doing?

**AM:** There is no single comprehensive list of all school / external ESS provision within Devon. However:

- one of the aims of the LLC training sessions is that governors can share ideas, issues and solutions within their local area!
- by using the DISC / FSD sites governors and parents can access information about a range of provision across the county
- by going to the ESS website ( <http://www.devon.gov.uk/extendedschools> ) and using the ' Download the complete prospectus ' link ( top RHS of page ) governors can find a range of case studies / good practice and comprehensive background information to Extended Services

#### 4. What is a GBs responsibility regarding Community Cohesion?

**AM:** Governors have a statutory duty to ensure that the school promotes community cohesion, and will be inspected upon this in section 5 Ofsted Inspections. Broadly speaking Community Cohesion would be monitored as any other area of school performance is monitored. A briefing for schools is currently in preparation to help governors to make sense of this duty. This was due to go out to schools last term, but with work on this area still under development across the LA, postponement was necessary. There is also some training / conferencing to deal with this subject in the planning stages – probably to be delivered in the autumn term.

#### 5. In PFI schools would any profit from Extended Services go to the companies or back into services?

Answer to follow

#### 6. What are the CRB arrangements for Carillion staff?

Answer to follow

**5. Health and Safety Overview** Further dates for courses for school governors are being finalised and the schools in those areas will be notified. This will be a 2 hour session, aiming to provide an insight into the current mandatory premises-related Health & Safety training which all schools are required to attend. The Overview will cover awareness of Asbestos, Legionella, CDM (Construction, Design and Management) & Fire as well as the implications involved in the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007. Places are likely to be limited to one place per school. Bookings will be via Devon County Council's online booking system at <http://www.devon.gov.uk/onlinebookings>. Any queries should be directed to Emma Huxtable in the Training Admin team on 01392 383388 or [emma.huxtable@devon.gov.uk](mailto:emma.huxtable@devon.gov.uk)

**Governor comment**

- *At one meeting a governor commented that 'governors are losing the will to live over this issue!' One governor was particularly upset about the 'corporate manslaughter' phrase – 'governors are not experts in these fields' Some governors who had been on H&S training had been alarmed by what they had heard – it was hoped that collectively governors will be protected especially when exercising 'due diligence'*

**Margaret Bullock** ( Health and Safety Manager, DCC ): We are sorry to read these impressions but the message regarding Corporate Manslaughter has to be clear so that positions are understood, especially where governors are the employer and therefore could be held liable for Corporate Manslaughter. However, Brendan Hurley - Business Transformation Unit ( BTU ) and Nigel Coleman ( Norfolk Property Services ) who developed and arranged these training sessions have attended some of the governor sessions and they really felt that the delivery was ' soft ' and considerate. The decision to use Dr David Rogers to present to governors was because of his senior position and experience. In the governor sessions attended a 'scare-mongering 'approach was not experienced - rather a relaxed and open style. Governors are welcome to contact the Devon Health & Safety Service on 01392 382027 for general advice on health & safety issues

*At other meetings it was felt more appropriate that individual schools rather than a central authority should have responsibility for day-to-day issues. It was suggested that HTs are ultimately responsible but that GBs should be taking all reasonable steps to ensure H & S work is being undertaken by qualified workers. At the end of the day it was suggested that accountability would apply where there was gross negligence*

**MB:** Schools do have day-to-day control. The training is provided because DCC ( in Community & controlled schools ) or Governors ( Aided & Foundation ) as the employers are ultimately responsible and not the headteacher. However, Governors in all schools are responsible as being in 'control of premises', hence the importance of their attendance

- *At all meetings there was a feeling that there do not seem to be enough courses to meet governors' and schools' needs for Health & Safety Training*

**MB:** Following the formation of the Devon Health & Safety Service in September 2008 there is now a full programme of school tailored H&S courses covering all school issues. To date 719 school employees ( and some governors ) have attended one or more of these school specific training events and the full programme is running every term – go to [www.devon.gov.uk/onlinebookings](http://www.devon.gov.uk/onlinebookings) and select the course category Health & Safety, then the sub category Premises Health & Safety and finally select the course title you prefer ( either an afternoon or evening 2-hour governor training session ). In addition, many schools have asked the team to come in and deliver bespoke training during inset days or as twilight sessions

- *Head teachers present at meetings were very scathing about the quality and delivery of the training currently being offered to them by outside providers. One spoke of 'Death by Power-point'!*

**MB:** Again we are disappointed to read this particular feedback as the information received after training ( see below ) shows a different picture. The subject matter is quite comprehensive. Whilst for some this is quite challenging in the volume of information that has been covered, the comments above are not reflected in the general feedback received:

Course	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Irrelevant
<b>Legionella</b>	5.90%	28.80%	36.50%	22.60%	6.25%	0.00%
[ Delegates responded ]	17	83	105	65	16	0
<b>Asbestos</b>	14.75%	45.90%	25.82%	12.70%	0.82%	0.00%
[ Delegates responded ]	36	112	63	31	2	0
<b>CDM &amp; FIRE</b>	8.99%	32.01%	36.33%	17.99%	3.96%	0.72%
[ Delegates responded ]	25	89	101	50	11	2
<b>Senior Managers</b>	28.57%	42.86%	26.19%	2.38%	0.00%	0.00%
[ Delegates responded ]	12	18	11	1	0	0
<b>Governors</b>	3.61%	45.78%	36.14%	12.05%	2.41%	0.00%
[ Delegates responded ]	3	38	30	10	2	0

- *Those who had attended an NPS Awareness Day considered it was all a bit vague and that delegates came away feeling that the message given was rather open and lacking in clarity*

- MB:** None of the H&S training topics would have been discussed at an NPS day – is this a reference to the BTU / NPS road shows that were run by Jon Williams and Chris Jay?
- *Many would like to see improvement in current training before it is delivered to governors*  
**MB:** The governor training is quite different from the comprehensive 4 half day sessions ( but also see feedback above )
  - *One governor felt information on legionella is very confusing especially over the matter of responsibility*  
**MB:** The detail is picked up in the complete half day sessions for the head teachers. If schools have specific issues they are signposted in the training to Nigel Coleman who is always happy to assist individual schools
  - *A request was made for more practical help on H&S / practical risk assessment for governors and HTs*  
**MB:** The School specific training on the programme includes training on risk assessments ( general ) and fire risk assessment. In addition, many schools have utilised the H&S Service and have had them deliver in-house bespoke training or paid for the H&S Service to come in to assist them in carrying out the actual risk assessments. This service is open to all schools to access
  - *There is lack of training for DDS caretaking staff*  
**MB:** DCCS staff can access the Devon Health & Safety Service training above if they wish and in addition they received training from their own managers in DCCS
  - *In a similar vein the requirement to have a paediatric first aider in nursery / primary schools was causing problems. There are not enough places on the courses currently offered but schools are told it is a requirement that staff undergo training*  
**MB:** Available delegate places are expected to exceed identified requirements due to lack of attendance at some courses
  - *PFI schools still do their own H&S audit and feed back to Carrillion*  
**MB:** PFI schools are still required to comply with HS legislation but the overview on the buildings differs from that of other schools

### Governor questions

#### 1. Why has it taken so long to offer training?

**MB:** As will be seen from the statistics above there has already been a significant amount of training including training for governors ( attended by over 80 different governors ). There remain, however, many schools where no governors have received any training and it is extremely important that, in the coming months this matter is addressed. To this end six additional sessions are running during March in the afternoon and evenings and others are planned for the summer term

#### 2. What can be done to reassure governors that the training will be of sufficient quality?

**MB:** Hopefully the comments made above go some way to reassuring governors that we are addressing this issue

#### 3. To what extent can GBs be held to account on these issues? Does the buck stop with Governors or the HT?

**MB:** Governors are in overall control of the premises and the headteacher is in day to day control. There is a shared accountability in nearly all of these areas ( this includes the local authority in community & controlled schools ). In all cases the enforcing authority would make a decision based on the facts as presented at the time, for example did the LA give correct advice, did the governors give the headteacher sufficient time, training and resources to carry out their duties, did the Headteacher carry out the actions identified on the H&S action plan following an LA audit etc.

**Phil Revell** ( Chief Executive Officer, NGA ): Schools and colleges ought to run good management systems. If there is code of practice or a guidance document then someone needs to ensure that the advice is being followed. This is the governing body's entire purpose ... it is why you are there. Good practice is your safeguard. If in doubt, think first about the consequences of your actions. And the consequence that should be uppermost in your minds is not the fine or prosecution but the funeral. As ever the situation is complicated by different kinds of school. In essence,

- **Community Schools** Provided schools are following established guidance, or their LA policy, then neither the GB nor the SMT are at risk. To be at risk a school would have to be aware of guidance or regulation, and then have **wilfully** ignored it.
- **VC + Independent** Here there is a greater responsibility on the employer to be 'aware' of best practice or guidance. Even so a GB or SMT would, as above, need to wilfully ignore a piece of guidance or policy to be liable under the new legislation.

Last year I wrote an article on this issue which can be found at [www.nga.org.uk/Analysis.aspx](http://www.nga.org.uk/Analysis.aspx).

#### 4. Governor training for Legionella has gone very quiet – what is happening?

**MB:** The governor training sessions discussed above include Legionella.

**6. Single Point of Entry / Admissions** Following last term's consultation the LA Executive has endorsed the recommendations in the post-discussion report ( <http://www.devon.gov.uk/speconsultation> ) that no action is taken by Devon to change policy pending the final publication of the national Rose Review on the primary curriculum, due at the end of March. In the course of the Devon consultation it was identified that many parents do not understand their rights and options with regard to the date of entry for their child. Whichever option ( single or dual point of entry ) is chosen, parents still have the right to defer entry until the term after a child's fifth birthday. Schools have also been advised that there are quite a lot of changes in the proposed admissions criteria for 2010/11 and that they should all look at and respond to these proposals. There is a new requirement to involve parents and community groups in the consultation and also a requirement from September 2010 for LAs to co-ordinate all In-Year admissions to schools. This will be a major change and one for schools to engage in ( <http://www.devon.gov.uk/sc-jan0839009.pdf> )

**Ivan Godfrey:** Within the full and complex consultation all schools need to make sure that, **as a matter of course**, they check to see whether there is a recommendation to change their Planned Admission Number ( PAN ) at a future date. This change may well be within the document but, at the moment, individual schools are not informed where such a change is proposed.

#### Governor comment

- *Governors from many of the smaller schools represented were strongly opposed to a single point of entry. They felt it would have an impact on pre-school funding and very young children ( especially boys ) would be entering school not having had pre-school play experience. There was also concern raised about children born prematurely*
- *There was a lot of concern that pre-schools are the losers in this and that they may close if it goes ahead*
- *Other governors pointed out that this would give parents the right to let their children born later in the academic year to start school earlier if they wished this to happen*
- *Some felt that pressure was being put on HTs to agree to this arrangement because if deferment was discouraged at a particular school children might go to schools that are more flexible*

#### Governor questions

##### 1. Why is Devon so keen on the single point of entry?

**Andrew Brent** ( Policy and Strategy Officer, CYPS ): Devon is not in favour or against a single point of entry. There are advantages and disadvantages in both options. Most of our neighbouring counties operate a single point of entry and have no intention to change. The discussion on points of entry was not met with overwhelming support for a change. Amongst parents and early years' settings, the large majority were against a single point of entry. The majority of schools responding were in favour of a move to single point of entry. It would have been helpful had a greater proportion responded, particularly all of the smaller schools with concerns. Some did, but not all. The recommendation would very probably have been against a change in policy across Devon Community and Voluntary Controlled schools. The imminent publication of the Rose Review somewhat overtook the Devon report and we took the pragmatic view that the implications of the Rose Review had to inform Executive. The interim Rose recommendation in favour of a single point of entry as the norm may lead to a change in legislation, in which event Devon would be obliged to comply.

**Christina Mabin** ( Church Schools' Liaison Officer ):The ' Informal Discussion ' on a single point of entry materialised from the Local Admissions Forum. As yet there has not been a formal consultation

##### 2. If children defer do they go in to Reception or Year 1?

**AB + CM:** If a child defers admission within the same academic year, that admission is to the Reception class either in January or after the Easter holiday. A deferment by summer-born children to the start of the term after the fifth birthday would be to the September but would not be to Reception. Deferment then would be to Year 1, staying in the same chronological cohort. In these cases, a place at a particular school would not be held open and a fresh In-Year application would be necessary. Children can defer to the following academic year and remain in a Reception class through an application on exceptional grounds and with appropriate professional support ( medical, social and/or educational )

##### 3. Do Admissions Officers keep schools informed of waiting lists now that parents apply directly to County Hall?

**AB:** Applications at the normal round of admissions to Reception are now made to the Admissions Team at Capital Court in Sowton. Waiting lists where necessary are held by the Team until the end of the first week of term in September and may then be passed to schools. There would normally be no reason for the list not to be shared with schools for information purposes. This can be useful in identifying children expected by a school but who had not applied.

Anyone with questions relating to issues in this item is welcome to contact me at [andrew.brent@devon.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.brent@devon.gov.uk)

**7. Training and DGS Issues** During last year DCC further developed an online booking system for various training courses. A benefit of this new process is that it is possible to identify course venues and dates at the time of your booking. Please go to [www.devon.gov.uk/onlinebookings](http://www.devon.gov.uk/onlinebookings) to book and/or contact Emma Huxtable at [emma.huxtable@devon.gov.uk](mailto:emma.huxtable@devon.gov.uk) for any more information.

**This arrangement does not apply to courses run by DGS, however.** Governors need to book DGS training either online at [www.devon.gov.uk/governors](http://www.devon.gov.uk/governors) or by phone: 01392/01271 383613. This is because they use the EMS data base which links their governor database through to their training database.

Please remember that the Summer 2009 training dates and booking forms are in the centre pages of the Spring Term edition of the Devon Governor Newsletter sent out to clerks in the schools' post on 24 February.

#### Governor comment

- Some GBs have bought in the services of DGS for an evening and teamed up with other schools within their LLC for training on, for example, extended schools. Debbie Clapshaw is investigating further in-house training for LLCs – it is worth doing as it cuts the costs for everybody  
**David Tall:** The issue of using the LLCs in a variety of ways is a live issue with DAG. It is anticipated that the next DAG Executive ( 12 March 09 ) will endorse a development of an LLC structure to support such initiatives
- A common theme throughout the meetings was the increasing value governors placed on working together within their LLCs
- With the increased emphasis on governor training several governors commented that the quality of training is good but that daytime dates and venues are not convenient for the majority of governors
- One governor was curious to know the level of awareness in GBs as to their knowledge of procedures as opposed to how they govern their schools ( matters such as election procedures / 'local arrangements' etc ). Do GBs keep records, for example, of how long people are elected for? What are the mechanics of this?  
**DT:** This is the responsibility of the Clerk
- GBs who use the DGS Effective Governing Bodies Folder / CD Rom recommended it highly and suggested GBs should use it to address this and to develop a code of practice on issues such as confidentiality. It was further suggested that there should be an induction pack for all new governors. It is important to distinguish between local arrangements and the law and regulations. Clerks will often provide clarity!!
- North Devon governors feel there are definitely not enough courses offered in North Devon
- Individual comments were passed on specific courses - Finance Training was considered excellent whereas H&S was dreadful
- Some of those present were not impressed with the NGA on-line course
- One governor issued a warning about the on-line booking system. Not only was it confusing but a request was made to divulge an NI number and this seemed an inappropriate invasion of privacy

#### Governor questions

**1. Can DGS provide more evening modules and training please? ... and more courses in North Devon?**

**Debbie Clapshaw** ( Manager Governor Support / Change + Manager Strategic Planning ): We will continue to offer more training through Local Learning Communities in addition to keeping our venue based training at various locations around the County. At risk of repeating myself from earlier feedbacks, we do our very best to offer a variety of training at venues all around the County, and at different times of the day and evening!

**2. What has happened to Link Governor Meetings?**

**DC:** Link governor meetings are back on the programme for the summer term. Our intention is to offer link governor meetings twice a year and Chairs Round a Table sessions once a year. 3 Chairs Around A Table meetings focussing on the Primary Capital Programme and Building Schools for the Future were advertised in last term's Devon Governor for this month ( March ). Unfortunately two have had to be cancelled as a result of a lack of bookings. **Governors are reminded to check the Devon Governor each term to see what training is available for them!**

**3. If there as a conflict between HR and governors on a matter of confidentiality, who wins?**

**DC:** Clerks should be good sources of advice to governing bodies on procedure and regulations – that is part of their role, and we would encourage all clerks to attend our New Clerks training and for governing bodies to support their clerks in attending training. There is already a model Code of Conduct for governing bodies to adopt which covers issues such as confidentiality, you can find this at [www.devon.gov.uk/governors](http://www.devon.gov.uk/governors)

**4. Does the online booking system require personal information?**

**DC:** We are trying to work with Scomis to improve our own on-line booking facility, but all of the training courses offered through our Service can be booked either via our website – as above, or by telephoning us on: 01392 or 01271 383612 or 383611. **Our** system for governor courses does not require governors to divulge any personal

information other than dietary requirements or any special need that we could help to meet

**8. Communication with Governors** There are various sources of information for governors. Key sources are outlined below

- **DAG**
  - Monthly newsletters + occasional urgent items are sent directly by e-mail to **DAG Intermediary Governors (IGs)** in schools. Their role is to forward any relevant information to fellow governors. More than half Devon schools already have an IG ... but there are still about 150 schools where DAG has no direct contact. If your school has no IG please get in touch with David Tall
  - Local and national information is posted on the **DAG website**. At the moment DAG is looking to develop its Policy Section in order to assist GBs in the development of their policies. Any GBs willing to consider sharing already developed non-statutory policies with everybody else please send them to David Tall. DAG would, of course, acknowledge authorship of all policies received
- **Local Authority** information can be accessed electronically from 2 main sources:
  - The weekly distribution sheet which lists all items sent to schools over the previous week and which can be found at <http://www.devon.gov.uk/schoolsdistribution> The information is divided in to sections for the HT, GB, administrator, continuing professional development, subject co-ordinators and SENCO. For governors the first 2 sections seem to hold most of the key documents
  - The Gold Sheet document sent to GB clerks on a weekly / fortnightly basis that itemises key documents available to GBs. It can be found at <http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/learning/schools/governors/dgs-clerks/dgs-goldsheet.htm>
- **National Governors' Association**
  - If you are not a member, basic information can be found on the website ( <http://www.nga.org.uk/> )
  - However, access to the weekly newsletters, members' forum, NGA magazines and papers is only possible if you / your school join NGA ( details on website )

*Governor comment*

- *The phrase 'Information Overload' certainly applies at times!*  
**David Tall:** Quite agree this is a possibility – but it is better to be over-informed than under-informed. Hence the IG – THEY decide where the information goes and as volunteers they appreciate that they have a filtering role
- *Many governors use the DAG website and find it very helpful*  
**DT:** This is most gratifying
- *Governors also welcome the Gold Sheet and ( where they use it ) the Weekly Distribution List*

#### **Governor questions**

**1. Can the Checklist be placed on the DAG website ... or is this unnecessary duplication?**

**DT + Jane Lucas ( Senior Governor Development Officer, Governor Support ):** We are working together to arrange this. However governors need to be aware of the source and will need to direct questions based on the Checklist to DGS rather than DAG

**2. Is it possible for there to be a single source of governor information??!!**

**DT:** Regrettably this is just not possible. The DAG website is about as co-ordinated as it gets

**JL:** If only life were this simple! We do our very best not to duplicate and to streamline information but unfortunately with different organisations issuing information in different formats at different intervals this is not really feasible

**3. Why is there not always consistency between items posted on the Gold Sheet and the Weekly Distribution List ( i.e. some appear on one for governors but not the other )**

**JL:** The weekly distribution list is usually very long and governors do not need to be aware of all the information that has gone to schools. When preparing the Gold Sheet we sift the distribution list and pull out items that we consider relevant and important to governors. The notes at the bottom are for clerks to governors. The Gold Sheet is primarily targeted at clerks to enable them to support the governing body and fulfil their role as the key person managing the distribution of information to the governing body

**4. If DAG is providing model policies on the website, can there be ONE list of important policies and also a means of alerting governors when policies change? Can there also be some clarity on what is strategic policy and what is not?**

**DT:** The DAG Website Manager is developing this exact regime

**JL:** DGS cannot comment on DAG's model policies list, but we do endeavour to keep one up to date list, which is 'Policies and Paperwork, What Should We Have?'. This is on our website. Trying to keep a comprehensive

list up to date is a big challenge as the guidance and model policies come from a variety of sources, many of which we do not 'own'. We have tried to be clear on this list as to which policies are legally required or strongly recommended rather than what is strategic and what is not. Governing bodies could use the list to audit their own current policy lists and see what they have and what they need

**9. School Report Cards** The DCSF plan to replace the School Profile with these. Currently a consultation document seeks input on the principles that should govern these new School Report Cards. Views are sought at: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/Publications/080195](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Publications/080195)

#### Governor questions

**1. In view of these changes should GBs spend any time on producing School Profiles?**

**Debbie Clapshaw:** At the moment the School Profile is still a statutory requirement and will continue to be until the Report Card replaces it which is likely to be from the autumn. School profiles have not proved popular with governors or parents, but the Report Card might prove to be even less popular! Regardless of statutory requirements governors need to think of imaginative and creative ways of getting the message across to parents and prospective parents about all the good things taking place in their schools!

**David Tall + Ivan Godfrey:** Faced with a number of important issues to address as CoGs we think we would both place the School Profile well towards the bottom of our list of priorities!

**10. Safer Recruitment** The Bichard on-line training became available in Autumn 2005, hosted on the NCSL website and available to all headteachers and one governor in each school. In 2007 the on-line training was supplemented by face to face training. In consultation with the Steering Group the DCSF is now looking to set the date after which it will be mandatory for all interview panels to contain a trained member. At present, dates under consideration for this are October 2009 or January 2010. The next meeting of the Steering Group is planned for early 2009 and a further update will be made available at that time.

#### Governor questions

**1. Do governors who take part in the training have to sit in on all interviews?**

**Helen Dickson ( Schools' Personnel Team Manager, DCC ):** Each interview panel should have at least one governor on it who has undertaken either the online or the face-to-face training. There is no requirement, however, for every governor that has been trained to sit on every panel.

**Ivan Godfrey:** It is important to ensure this happens – imagine the media witch-hunt if, after the deadline, your school were to employ an inappropriate person without a properly trained governor on the panel and this became public knowledge.

#### **11. Personnel Issues**

At one meeting a governor present was concerned about the level of complexity in HR management for governors. The governor felt they were being asked to handle issues that they were not qualified to deal with. The role of governors in HR issues is very time-consuming, especially for self-employed governors. Should special consideration not be given to financial loss in these circumstances? One person proposed putting such eventualities in to the governors' expenses policy, but it was felt that if advice was sought the recommendation would be that there should be no remuneration. It was suggested that the governor asking the question put together a case and send it to the NGA and Judith Johnson ( copy to David Tall). The whole matter of lay governors getting so deeply involved in HR cases should be looked at.

#### Governor questions

**1. What support can be given to governors faced with complex personnel issues?**

**Helen Dickson:** All schools / colleges have the opportunity to purchase personnel support via the Portfolio of Services to schools. Schools / colleges can decide what level of personnel support they wish to have:

- BASIC Service (Telephone and / or email advice and guidance from a Personnel Officer via the Personnel

Helpline)

- ESSENTIAL Service (A Personnel Officer will visit the school when requested to support Governors and/or Headteacher with Personnel issues (for schools under 100 staff for 2 visits or over 100 for 4 visits)
- PREMIUM Service (A Personnel Officer will visit the school when requested to support Governors and/or Headteacher with Personnel issues for up to four days.

Additionally personnel support can be purchased under a pay-as-you-go arrangement.

Further details of the service provided can be found at: <http://www.devon.gov.uk/schoolsportfolio0811-personnel.pdf>

## **2. Should a means be found of supporting governors financially when such issues lead them to financial loss as a result of the time commitment involved?**

**NGA:** Attractive though it may appear at first sight this is fraught with problems. There would, for example, be significant problems defining phrases such as 'time commitment' and 'financial loss'. In addition there are, potentially, just too many governors country wide for consideration to be given to this level of compensation.

One possible solution might be for schools to address this through their expenses policy on a case by case basis.

**Debbie Clapshaw:** DGS produced a model governor expense policy a while ago which is available on our website. It is for the individual governing bodies to decide the policy to adopt and how to apply it, but the overriding expectation is that volunteers should not be personally out of pocket from their volunteering.

**12. Personal Education Plans ( PEPs )** All Children in Care in Devon should have an up-to-date PEP with designated teachers being central to this work. Recent monitoring shows that 69% of Devon CiCs have an up to date PEP – the LA is working to reach a target of 80%. LA contact Kim Piper [kim.piper@devon.gov.uk](mailto:kim.piper@devon.gov.uk) All governors are asked to encourage and support this work. There has also been a request for the names of nominated governors for CiC. This is not statutory but the LA is encouraging the process as good practice. So far there have not been many responses, but it is thought that there are quite a lot of schools with this role who have not yet informed the Authority.

*Governor comment*

- *Early intervention with these children is crucial and society needs to provide the money to fund it*

### **Governor questions**

#### **1. Do these PEPs move schools with the child?**

**Deborah Booth** ( Strategic Project Manager, Achievement of Children in Care ): The school forwards the completed PEP, including the review documents, coursework etc, along with the child's school file in the normal way to the receiving school or education setting. This helps ensure continuity and speedy transfer of information

**Section B follows on page 15**

## B Issues offering just Governor Feedback Comments

**13. Special Educational Needs 'Value for Money' Resource Pack** This voluntary resource, developed by National Strategies and the Audit Commission, is designed to help headteachers and management teams support whole-school strategic planning and intervention, ensure the inclusion of SEN and AEN pupils, evaluate progress against expected outcomes for those pupils and assess value for money in using resources. It helps schools gather evidence for the Ofsted self-evaluation process and supports the use of school resources with maximum impact. Headteachers can download the pack, containing guidance, a series of self-evaluation questions, accompanying background papers and examples of good practice, from <http://sen-aen.audit-commission.gov.uk>

*Governor comment*

- *Interesting this is raised in Checklist - at the last DAG Conference the SEN Framework was recommended*

**14. Gaining Ground** This is a DCSF proposal to consider what can be done to support secondary schools which have good levels of attainment, but have not yet got the best out of a substantial minority of children who did well in primary school, but have lost momentum at secondary level. The aim of the strategy is to put the spotlight on these schools, so that parents, governors and LAs challenge and support them to help pupils fulfil their early promise. The schools to which this strategy is broadly addressed lie above the KS 4 floor ( some considerably above it ) but are below average in terms of their pupils' progression from KS 2 to KS4. This document is available at: <http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/00941-2008DOM-EN.pdf>

*Governor comment*

- *Despite the presence of secondary governors at all meetings no comment was offered on this proposal at all!*

**15. GB committee practice** DGS know that a number of primary GBs have reduced to 2 committees ( usually 'Resources' covering Personnel, Finance, Buildings and H&S; and 'School Improvement / Standards' covering curriculum, targets, monitoring SIP / SDP, more detailed knowledge of SEF etc ). Anecdotal feedback is that this is popular and working well. Jane Lucas would be interested in establishing more systematic feedback to help GBs who are still struggling with a less than effective committee structure. Where a GB is operating 2 committees she would be interested to have:

- name of school
- names of committees
- level of delegation to committees
- number of meetings per year
- copies of terms of reference if happy to share
- copy of annual cycle that works to a 2 committee structure
- any comment on how well the system is working / pros and cons

Feedback to Jane at [jane.lucas@devon.gov.uk](mailto:jane.lucas@devon.gov.uk)

*Governor comment*

- *At all meetings there were representatives of some GBs operating with 2 or no committees. They agreed to forward relevant information to Jane Lucas*

**16. Primary School Improvement Partner Programme** The briefing paper 3 ( January 2009 ) was given out at meetings ( <http://www.devon.gov.uk/sc-dec0838019.pdf> )

*Governor comment*

- *At all meetings governors expressed satisfaction with the SIPs arrangements and real benefit to their schools*

### **17. School Meals**

*Governor comment*

- *At several meetings concerns were expressed about the impact of nutritional standards requirements on the take up of school meals. In North Devon it was reported that in one area all but six schools are self-performing but uptake of meals has dropped since the introduction of the nutritional standards.*

**Ivan Godfrey:** This is a complex issue! On the one hand DCC's healthy school meals have been recognised nationally for their quality. On the other hand, by pushing the healthy meals agenda, schools appear to be faced, in some areas at least, with declining numbers of children eating school meals.

Devon's Catering Service has recently been awarded the Soil Association's Food for Life Catering Mark - only the third school meals' provider in the country to win a Food for Life Award across the whole service at this level. To win the award, Devon had to prove:

- ❖ At least 75 per cent of dishes on the menu are freshly prepared
- ❖ Meat is farm assured as a welfare minimum
- ❖ Eggs are from free range hens
- ❖ More than a third of produce is locally sourced
- ❖ Menus are seasonal and in-season produce is highlighted
- ❖ Menus cater well for all dietary needs in the school population
- ❖ No undesirable additives or hydrogenated fats are used

This is the sort of approach that many applaud in principle. The difficulty is turning this approach in to a reality that means greater numbers of children eating school meals - and this will not happen overnight.

NGA supports strongly the work of the School Food Trust and its Million Meals campaign, aimed at increasing the number of pupils taking school meals by 1,000,000 by the end of 2010. It is easy to scoff at targets that may not be met but, in reality, all we can do at our own individual school level is to attempt to support this work together with the emphasis to parents that, ultimately, they have the responsibility for most of the food their child(ren) will eat! A Governors' Guide from the School Food Trust should have arrived recently in your school – it is certainly worth following up some of its suggestions.

**Section C follows on page 17**

## C Additional Issues / Information

**18. Unitary Status** The Secretary of State for Local Government and Communities has now extended the deadline by which the Boundary Committee must provide its advice on local government reorganisation in Devon, Norfolk and Suffolk from this Friday, February 13 to July 15, 2009. The Boundary Committee will consider its position in the light of this decision. This delay almost certainly means that the implementation of any eventual unitary recommendations will be delayed from April 2010 to April 2011 and that local elections for Devon County Council will go ahead in June ( see [http://www.devon.gov.uk/eastdevonjr\\_update.pdf](http://www.devon.gov.uk/eastdevonjr_update.pdf) )

**19. Revised CRB Disclosure Policy** This document provides updated procedures and guidance on how to manage the recruitment, transfer and re-checking process of all employees into positions where they will typically have unsupervised access to children and vulnerable adults ( <http://www.devon.gov.uk/sc-dec0834015.pdf> ) The major change to the policy is that it now includes a corporate requirement for 3 yearly re-checks on CRBs to be carried out with effect from 1st November 2008 as agreed by the Corporate Management Board. The revised Policy will need to be adopted and implemented by the GB as soon as possible. It is essential however that these re-checks are approached in a staggered manner, in order for the records Disclosure Service to resource the additional requirements. This is a model policy for schools. If any school wishes to opt out of the requirement for 3 yearly re-checking they must first inform either Judith Johnson or the HR Helpdesk with their decision and reasons for this.

**Tara Hall ( Records Disclosure Service Manager ):** Not long before half term I sent information to schools about the Independent Safeguarding Authority's new vetting and barring procedures which come in to place in October. After that date it will be illegal for a school to employ a member of staff who has not gone through this procedure. I would encourage governors to read this and to consider attending one of the information sessions if they felt it appropriate. There will be further sessions later in the year. It is also important to note that the ISA check is additional to the CRB check and not a replacement for it.

**20. Baby P Issues** Following the national storm over this case the government has issued Statutory Guidance on Safeguarding of Children – schools now have a duty to co-operate and will be involved in Children's Trusts. The LA is now required to complete an s11 Audit on behalf of Education for the Local Safeguarding Children Board. This audits education's compliance with safeguarding advice, guidance, policies and procedures. Up to now GBs have been asked to consider an annual safeguarding report and send a copy to us ( not every school currently complies with this request ). This requirement will have to be much more stringently monitored as the information will be used to compile the annual s11 audit. A new audit tool will be sent to all schools after Easter for completion during the summer term. Governors need to be aware how critical it is that the audit is completed.

**21. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools** DCSF's ambition is to make England the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up. It has produced a document that describes how the entire school system will need to change, and how individual schools will need to look beyond traditional boundaries, be outward facing and work in close partnership with young people, parents, other schools, colleges, universities and with other children's services. NGA expects this to have serious implications for GBs, as the following extract indicates: "School governors have three key roles in relation to the operation and management of schools: setting strategic direction, ensuring accountability and acting as a critical friend to the school. In accordance with The Children's Plan, we are currently reviewing the role of GBs with the aim of improving their skills and efficiencies, but with the recognition that the vision for the 21st century school system may have further implications for GBs. A report on this review will be issued in early 2009. As we design the new accountability system, we will consider what this means for GBs, including the extent to which they can work across partnerships of schools to promote more joint working, as is currently happening in the Trust Schools and Federations programmes." Consultation on this has just closed.

**Debbie Clapshaw:** I think the possible implications for governors coming from this consultation together with any outcomes from the review into governance are likely to be huge! I'm almost sure that we will be looking at much smaller executive board style GBs, still with a range of stakeholder representation, but also with an expectation on particular skills being evident. If they are serious about GBs operating strategically then they have to strip away some of the more onerous and time consuming governor responsibilities - and put them somewhere else! My biggest hope is that we can see some evidence of joined up thinking!

**22. DAG Conference on 4 July at County Hall** The theme for the Conference will be "Self improvement = School Improvement". Guest speakers include Sue Palmer, author of "Toxic Childhood", Chris Keates, Secretary of the NASUWT, David Triggs the CEO of the Academies Enterprise Trust in Essex and Principal of Greensward Academy ( who will be talking about the monitoring role of governors ) + our own Judith Johnson. Online application is available. DAG anticipates a "sell out" so you are advised to book early. Although it is an all day event the programme will be designed so that Governors can dip in and out and attend at their convenience. One of the highlights of last year's Conference was the contribution from a number of our youngsters and this year we

are delighted to have secured the services of Mary Tavy PS's Gospel Choir. DAG is most grateful that the Conference is once again being supported by NPS (SW). The Conference is being opened by Whitchurch CPS Choir singing their award winning anthem D.E.V.O.N. We shall also be running a poetry competition, which we hope will be supported by all schools.

**23. Volunteer governor representatives** are sought for the:

- **School Organisation Forum ( secondary )** which advises and supports the LA and Dioceses in
  - promoting choice and diversity in school places;
  - promoting high standards;
  - ensuring every child matters;
  - respecting parental preferences;
  - achieving sustainable patterns of provision
- **School Commissioning Board ( secondary )** which engages schools in influencing the strategic commissioning of education services and monitors their delivery, including:
  - Services that trade with schools, from any part of DCC;
  - Market development and framework decisions affecting alternative provision;
  - Integrated school improvement services, where DCC is a key commissioner.
- **DAG Executive**
  - We welcome nominations or names of volunteers from individual governors prepared to join the Executive to help in developing further the role of governance across the county. We anticipate a couple of vacancies on the DAG Executive this year, so hope Governors will feel able to volunteer their names for election.

For further details on all of these roles and offers of interest please contact David Tall

**24. Targeted Intervention & Support Programme ( TISP )** Following discussions with DASH, DAPH, SHAD and DAG the latest version of the planned revisions to the schools causing concern programme can be found at <http://www.edwebs.co.uk/schcom/sc-dec0835005a.doc> This version reflects many comments fed back to Judith Johnson ( Director for Learning & Schools ) together with the new name of Targeted Intervention & Support Programme ( TISP! ). Views have also been sought from individual Schools / Headteachers / Governors as well as associations to secure a collective view. This consultation will be aired at the spring round of DAPH Briefings and area meetings for DASH as well as the next meeting of the unions at the TCC. The LA hopes to have the final revised version printed and ready for use from the new financial year 2009-10.

**25. Teaching Awards** March 1st was the deadline for this year's nominations. However, do not panic at the thought of missing this year's deadline - just start to think about next year!! You can find all the information you will need about this wonderful process at <http://www.teachingawards.com/nominations/>. Making a nomination is a unique opportunity to give teachers, teaching assistants, governors and schools the recognition they deserve. Nominating is a quick and easy process which only takes a few minutes. If you have any queries about making a nomination call 020 7776 2340 or e-mail [nominations@teachingawards.com](mailto:nominations@teachingawards.com)

**26. NPS South West Limited** For those schools that have elected to be part of the Devon Maintenance Partnership scheme, NPS South West Limited provide a 24/7/365 emergency out of hours telephone service to deal with building related emergencies for those services covered by the Scheme. NPS have a team of 8 surveyors / engineers who provide the service on a rota basis. Calls during normal works hours should be made to the local NPS area offices as normal. Calls outside of normal working hours and at weekends and public holidays should be made to 07826 858727. Queries relating to this service should be made to [chris.jay@nps-sw.co.uk](mailto:chris.jay@nps-sw.co.uk)

**27. Devon Music Service** Mix 09 takes place on Wednesday 24 June 2009 at Westpoint, Exeter. This is now in its fifth year. The day celebrates the musical work going on across Devon: all schools have been invited to attend, and there will be more than 4500 pupils enjoying a wonderful variety of music in 17 venues across Westpoint. For further information on The Mix see this website - <http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/dms-mix09.htm>

**28. Snippets of Information**

- **DAG**
  - 159 Clerks were nominated nationally for the **2009 Clerk of the Year Award**. 2 Clerks to Devon GBs have been short listed regionally - Maggie Dunlop ( Clyst Heath Primary ) and Ann Inman ( Horrabridge Primary )
  - A new **Memorandum of Understanding** between the LA and DAG has been agreed and is on the website
  - **Building Schools for the Future** DAG is working to develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the LA about the procedures for this policy which will include the implications and commitments for schools that are involved
  - The **Axe Valley Governor** magazine is an example of the value of governor LLC co-operation
- **Local Authority**

➤ **Headlines** Every 3 weeks Anne Whiteley ( Director CYPS ) sends out a useful newsletter on key issues including the celebration of successes ( <http://www.devon.gov.uk/j4s-headlinesnewsletter.htm> )

- **NGA**

- **New Leadership Standard** There is a formal consultation on proposed new National Standards for School Leadership ( <http://www.ncsl.org.uk/national-standards-for-school-leadership-2008.pdf> ). NGA has real concerns about the wording of the Standard, which does not appear to recognise the strategic leadership role of the GB. Governor views are sought
- The annual survey into Headteacher recruitment found that one in three primary schools and one in four secondary schools have had to re-advertise head teachers' posts after failing to attract suitable candidates. Report writer, Professor John Howson, has suggested that all primary deputy head posts should be made fixed contract, on a five-year basis. This he believes might encourage deputies to consider moving on to headship, and allow schools to replace deputies who had no appetite for the top job.
- **Clare Collins** is the new Chair of NGA
- **Code of Conduct** There is a new proposed code of conduct and practice from the General Teaching Council ( [http://www.opm.co.uk/gtc/GTCE\\_draft\\_code.pdf](http://www.opm.co.uk/gtc/GTCE_draft_code.pdf) ). This is currently in the consultation stage. All public service professionals are expected to adhere to clear standards of behaviour and practice and to shared values - and teachers are no exception. There was some unhelpfully sensationalist reporting on this just before Christmas, which chose to focus on the section on teachers being positive role models. The assumption being, of course, that all teachers are just desperate to get drunk and to wear trainers.

### D Useful documents for GBs

1. Effective Governing Body File and CD from Devon Governor Services – templates for standing orders, agendas etc
2. Finding & Keeping Effective School Governors from Devon Governor Services ( 2007 )
3. Exploring Federation - A Toolkit for Schools from DCC
4. Tomorrow's Leaders Today - Finding, Developing & Keeping Great Headteachers from NCSL
5. Tomorrow's Leaders Today - Succession Planning : key themes for governors from NCSL + NGA
6. Learning Data Sets – sent to all LLCs by DCC
7. Achieving Excellence for Learning in Devon – chart of key officers + photos!!
8. Achievement through Collaboration Conference 2008
9. Matters Arising magazine – 6 times a year from NGA to members
10. NGA papers – available to members
11. Devon Governor – termly magazine
12. Governors – termly magazine from DCSF