

# Devon Association of Governors

## Issues raised at Area Governor Meetings Autumn 2009

### Introduction

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 about 100 governors, clerks and HTs 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 Support 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. **Comments in blue have been brought forward since the round of Area 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, DAG, NGA and others**

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

**The first 5 items, in particular, interlink and warrant considerable consideration.**

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. Governors who attend clearly value these meetings. One GB had even rearranged its planned Full GB meeting to allow governors to attend!**

### Key sources of Communication for Governors

- **DAG**
  - Monthly newsletters + items sent directly by e-mail to **DAG Intermediary Governors (IGs)** in schools.
  - Local / national information on **DAG website** ([www.dag.gb.com](http://www.dag.gb.com))  
**Our communications routes / methods are being re-evaluated continually. The one aspect however which will not change is the need for an Intermediary Governor in each GB to receive regular DAG info. To date 252 schools take advantage of this service. If your school does not yet have one please seek a volunteer, let your Area Officer know and they will start the process**
- **Local Authority**
  - Gold Sheet <http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/learning/schools/governors/dgs-clerks/dgs-goldsheet.htm>
  - The weekly distribution sheet - <http://www.devon.gov.uk/schoolsdistribution> - lists all items sent to schools over the previous week. For governors the first 2 sections (HT + GB) hold most of the key documents
- **National Governors' Association (NGA)**
  - 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) **DAG recommends schools to join NGA**  
**Ivan Godfrey: The weekly news' briefings in themselves are worth the membership. Time and time again they give the facts, balance and reality behind hugely misleading headlines and broadcast items – beware of what you read about education in the popular press!!!**

### Contact details

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**Documents available at meetings and on DAG website (<http://www.dag.gb.com/areameetingsautumn2009.htm>)**

- Item 1 Valuable lessons: Improving economy and efficiency in schools - briefing for school governors from the Audit Commission
- Item 2 Helpful feedback from a CoG at a primary school inspected under the new OfSTED Framework  
Summary of Good Practice for schools in achieving Parental Involvement  
School Improvement Partners – programme for visits this term + overview feedback from last term's visits
- Item 3 Brief Overview of Primary Capital Programme + Building Schools for the Future
- Item 11 Summary of Early Years Provision and Support for Governors from Early Years Team
- Item 12 White Paper – Ed Balls Letter and comments from Debbie Clapshaw, DCC and NGA
- Item 14 Guidance for governors on the Induction of new HTs once appointed  
Guidance from NGA on how to avoid pitfalls in policies linked to Employment Law
- Item 19 Children & Young People's Services Directorate Who's Who

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**Section A (pages 3 – 17)**

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**Section B (pages 17 – 18)**

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**Section C (pages 19 – 21)**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>12. Government White Paper</li><li>13. Learning and Development Partnership</li><li>14. HR Issues</li><li>15. Teaching Awards</li><li>16. Children in Care</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>17. Admissions / Single Point of Entry</li><li>18. NGA Issues</li><li>19. Snippets</li><li>20. Value of these meetings + feedback!!!</li></ul>
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There is also a list of useful documents for GBs at the end of the document on page 22

**Finally on page 22 there is outline information about future meetings**

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

### 1. Financial Issues including Fairer Funding, Broadband and FMSiS (see document on website)

After a long period of considerable investment in education and a very high level of capital spending there will clearly be considerable financial restraints in the coming years. Governors were informed that:

- Currently Devon is 148<sup>th</sup> out of 151 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. [As the Fairer Funding Campaign website states \(www.fairfundingfordevonschools.org.uk\)](http://www.fairfundingfordevonschools.org.uk) 'Devon gets £375 less than the national average for each pupil.'
- On virtually all comparisons, Devon school balances show how well they were managed and controlled for 2008/09 compared with other Authorities and that they are amongst the lowest in the country. Overall, Devon school balances (including standards funds) fell by around £1.7 million in 2008/9 mainly in the Secondary sector. Recent budget returns show how cost pressures are continuing to impact on all schools in the second year of the current 2008 - 2011 multi-year budget period
- 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. This Fairer Funding Campaign, co-ordinated by Peter Doyle (DCC Head of External Affairs) and involving school representatives, is running an active campaign over the next eighteen months, to try and secure a fairer settlement for 2011 and beyond. Contacts have already been established with local MPs and PPCs, information sent to schools and key items placed with the local media. A website has been established
- DEF has agreed that distribution of the £1.02 million surplus on the 2008/09 DSG is deferred until the second half of the current financial year when funding pressures ahead should be a little clearer. DEF has also asked that all options for the redistribution of the surplus be discussed by the Schools Funding Issues Group at the appropriate time
- In the context of these financial restraints 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. Its discussions are framed within the principles set out in the Devon **Vision for Learning in 21st Century** document ([www.devon.gov.uk/bsf](http://www.devon.gov.uk/bsf) and follow the link to the 'Vision'). This group has met throughout the summer months and provided a draft report to a full-day meeting of DEF + County Councillors / Officers on November 6<sup>th</sup>. Building upon comments from this meeting a finalised report will go to DEF on November 25<sup>th</sup> and then through the political process. It is planned to come up with a set of proposals and options to present to schools for consultation in the Spring Term
- Ministers have confirmed support for a 2.3% pay increase from September 2009, and a further 2.3 % from 2010. This offers some predictability and stability, and will be welcomed by many GBs. Actual inflation is difficult to judge at the moment. The retail price index is a negative, at minus 1.1%, but the consumer price index, generally agreed to be a better measure of actual spending, is much higher, at 2.2%
- The transfer to school budgets of 'Broadband Costs' could not have come at a worse time. A letter from John Barnard (<http://www.devon.gov.uk/sc-july0919005.pdf>) explains this in greater detail
- The Audit Commission has sought to identify over £400 million of savings nationwide (see document on DAG website or [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/nationalstudies/localgov/Pages/valuablelessons.aspx](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/nationalstudies/localgov/Pages/valuablelessons.aspx)) although some of its conclusions could be questioned
- **Finally, Devon has so far successfully supported one third of its schools to achieve FMSiS standard, a further third are near completion and the remaining third have some work to do (indeed 10% have yet to start the FMSiS process). This means that about 200 Devon schools have yet to achieve FMSiS. Governors and HTs still have some way to go! The deadline of March 31<sup>st</sup> 2010 is drawing very near (this deadline includes receiving confirmation from the LA that the school is 'believed' to meet the FMSiS). GBs are encouraged to support their HTs and administrators to look again at what needs to be done to achieve FMSiS status for their school. Finance link officers are able to help with assessing where the gaps are. 2 key Devon documents which support the provision of evidence are The Devon Finance Manual and The Effective GB file. **As if more encouragement were needed, the new Ofsted framework will be looking more explicitly at value for money and financial probity****

#### Governor comment

- ❖ *Many governors expressed concern about school finances using phrases such as 'finances are as tight as ever', 'schools are generally in trouble and the cost of running schools is growing' and 'there are major deficits everywhere'*
- ❖ *The issue of falling roll numbers in schools is exacerbating already difficult financial circumstances for many. One governor commented that there are 'too many schools chasing too few pupils'*

- ❖ *It was generally felt that small schools need to be aware that they are in for a very hard time and that there will possibly be the end of subsidies to small schools. Another governor commented that if Devon shuts small schools a lot of money will then need to be spent on transporting children further afield*
- ❖ *One governor felt that federations were better placed to make efficiencies. Another governor commented that federation was not a question of 'if' but 'when' and also the type of federation to opt for. However, a representative from a federated school emphasised that there had been no financial saving when they federated as they had to incorporate middle management and this proved costly. One governor questioned whether efficiencies could be made in, for example, administration, as staff are already overworked*  
**David Tall:** Saving money should not be the primary motive for federation – recent remarks from the Audit Commission and Ed Balls linking Federation to cost cutting were unhelpful and, in fact, wide of the mark!
- ❖ *One governor commented that Devon as a county is very poor at claiming free school meals and this has an impact on finances. There is no need for parents to be embarrassed because they can now apply for free meals online at [www.devon.gov.uk/free\\_school\\_meals-register](http://www.devon.gov.uk/free_school_meals-register) or they can access a hard copy of the application form to print off via [http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/learningschools/supporting-children/financial\\_support/free\\_school\\_meals.htm](http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/learningschools/supporting-children/financial_support/free_school_meals.htm) They can print off the form, fill it in and then post it directly to the address on the form, thus bypassing the school office / HT (provided they meet the criteria)*
- ❖ *Many were shocked by the additional cost to schools for Broadband. One school is now satisfied with the level of the new charge having spoken to Nick Pearce ([nick.pearce@devon.gov.uk](mailto:nick.pearce@devon.gov.uk)) and been given a comprehensive justification for the charge which is for far more than just Broadband access – see, for example, the comments on safeguarding issues below in Item 5*
- ❖ *One governor with detailed knowledge of FMSiS pointed out that when it comes to OfSTED a school cannot be 'outstanding' without it. It was felt that many governors feel they do not have the expertise to deal with FMSiS and that they need to engage more – a number of governors pointed out that the process is not as challenging as it may seem at first. Children Centres and Nurseries are not yet subject to FMSiS. It was important to ensure that:*
  - *All relevant information is recorded in governor minutes*
  - *Cross-references to FMSiS are made in the SEF*
- ❖ *Another governor wrote, subsequent to a meeting, to say that their school had not found FMSiS quite as straightforward as some suggest. There is good practice and it complements good audit discipline but the compilation of the evidence file, whether in paper or on-line form through file links, had been a major administrative task with a significant cost attached. It had been hard to know what was 'adequate evidence' and what was over-kill. The work load did not seem directly proportional to school size, either, and might be intrusive for smaller schools*  
**David Curnow** (Senior Audit Manager) It is recognised by Audit that some schools have more to consider and prepare for in reviewing their position against FMSiS. However, FMSiS is not as challenging as it first seems and schools should have been doing all the requirements for years now as it concerns knowing what the school does and being able to demonstrate this through normal practices. Training is available from Audit via DGS and can be procured direct to school (although we would prefer a collective approach from schools for this perhaps by LLC). Audit would caution schools against creating huge files of FMSiS evidence. It is better to ensure that evidence exists in school and to provide links to it through FMSiS self-assessment. With regard to 'adequate evidence', schools should refer to Audit's Model Answers to FMSiS (<http://www.staff.devon.gov.uk/cr/dfs/audit/schoolsaudit/dfsauditfmsis.htm> - accessible in school but not on home computers) and guidance which shows clearly what is acceptable evidence. This has been available and promoted over the last 3 years! **Schools should be aware that, from the deadline date, they cannot be classed as 'outstanding' if they do not have FMSiS.**

### Governor questions

#### 1. How can governors become involved in the Fairer Funding Campaign?

**Peter Doyle** (Head of External Affairs DCC): Devon schools launched a campaign on October 19<sup>th</sup> to persuade Government to tackle the inequalities in funding for schools and end the post-code lottery affecting the young people of our county. DAG was party to that launch and **governor help in supporting and promoting the campaign is needed**. Building on the effectiveness of technology in other campaigns we are trying to use it as much as possible to promote this campaign.

- A website promoting the campaign's aims, the facts about Government funding of schools in Devon, and latest news is at: [www.fairfundingfordevonschools.org.uk/index.html](http://www.fairfundingfordevonschools.org.uk/index.html) or <http://bit.ly/2H0IXy> and there is also a link to the site via the DAG website.
- We have launched a Downing Street petition: <http://bit.ly/3kJo8w> Please use every means possible to encourage members of your school community (particularly parents!) to sign up. The more names on the petition, the more Ministers and MPs will take notice.
- I would also encourage people to link up to the petition from Facebook and other social media

sites. If people are using Twitter they can follow the campaign on <http://twitter.com/handsup4devon> ... and when people "tweet" about the campaign if they include this [#handsup4devon](#) it means like-minded tweeters can link up!

- Local schools can help in spreading the campaign message. Your school may wish to include a link to the campaign website on your own web-pages. If you would like to send messages of support, the campaign website has a "Have Your Say" section and schools will be kept informed of prominent supporters who back the campaign.
- The most recent update on how the campaign is developing can be found on the DAG website at <http://www.dag.gb.com/fairfunding.htm>
- If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to get in touch with [peter.doyle@devon.gov.uk](mailto:peter.doyle@devon.gov.uk)

**Gillian Allcroft** ( Policy Officer, NGA ): NGA is involved in the DCSF's School Funding Implementation Group and has contributed to the review of the DSG. The consultation on the new distribution formula will be launched probably in the New Year and the NGA will be responding. Although such a consultation may seem daunting for GBs we would urge as many as possible to respond also. A new formula will hopefully be more objective and fairer and the f40 group has submitted significant evidence to the review group.

## 2. How do governors make constructive challenges to Devon re 'best value'?

**Caroline Armstrong** (Head of the School Funding and Support Team): One way is by contacting DAG representatives on the Devon Education Forum ( DEF ) or its sub-group, the Commissioning Board ( CB ) - these are Rupert Butler, Ivan Godfrey, Christina Mabin and Don Paterson. I also think it very much depends on the topic and a communication could also be addressed to the relevant officer / appropriate senior manager

## 3. Is Devon looking at the viability of small schools?

**John Barnard** (Head of Resource Strategies): An Area Review process has recently been introduced where, over a 4 year cycle, all LLCs look at the most appropriate local provision (see Item 3 on BSF, PCP and Area Reviews). In addition, all schools that have a per pupil funding twice the Devon average are automatically reviewed on an annual basis

## 4. Is there to be a cap on minimum funding guarantees to schools?

**CA:** There are several aspects to minimum funding impacting on schools' formula funding. DCSF requires the application of a minimum funding guarantee which broadly requires that the annual increase per pupil currently is at least 2.1%. Certain aspects of the formula are excluded from the minimum funding guarantee, e.g. funding for building maintenance and specific funding for pupils with SEN.

Devon's formula currently applies a minimum funding top up to both primary and secondary schools. In the primary phase minimum funding applies at numbers on roll below 53 and in the secondary phase where year group sizes are lower than 135. Other protections that could be considered to guarantee at least a minimum level include funding to bring a school to at least the floor level for the Devon formula or funding of phantom pupils in Key Stage one. Any of these could be capped or changed in the future. However, consultation and advance notice can be expected if such changes are proposed.

## 5. Is too much money spent on bureaucracy at County Hall rather than at the frontline in schools?

**Ivan Godfrey:** I will put my head on the block and say that there is a popular misconception fed by often inaccurate presentations in some sections of the media that there is a bloated bureaucracy sitting in County Halls. My personal impression over many years of compiling these reports is that the overwhelming majority of County Hall staff work very hard and extremely long hours in providing schools with the type of support they seek ... and, without which, they would be under even greater pressure

**Judith Johnson** (Director Learning and Schools): I would present the following facts:

- DCC central services work to a commissioned basis now on needs that have been identified by data, by statute or increasingly by schools themselves via a democratic and representative system
- If I were not directing the deployment of the pot of funds under my leadership then very little of it would come to schools as it is largely for statutory central functions or grant ring-fenced activities. Indeed, if the LA did not take up these activities and cover the matched risk funding in some cases, then the system as a whole would lose out on some £9m
- The funding covers a range of support services which deliver directly to schools. Whilst the funding is not in the control of schools it is for the benefit of schools e.g. Educational Psychologists, EWOs, support for travellers, Children in Care, excluded pupils, schools causing concern, schools with budget difficulties, provision of locality based youth services, young offenders etc, 14-19 area coordinators working with their local group of schools on issues of their choice
- Once all of this is accounted for the amount that is ' spare' - i.e. for me to allocate annually or to direct at my determination is in the region of about £80k per year or about £200 per school. Yet many schools still expect a magic pot to appear from the LA to solve emerging in-year issues. There has not been inflation at the centre at all but a steady 3-10% reduction of staffing figures. The only increases come from grant funded discrete projects that carry all the risks of time limited posts
- In all audits and recent scrutiny procedures we have come out as good value for money as a CYPS service with judgements erring on the side of low spend comparative to other similar sized LAs

- LAs will be steadily reducing expenditure by about 5% on average over the coming years whilst schools will grow approximately 1% per annum
- When, in the future, schools get their thin spread of the delegated funding and then have to meet all the accountabilities that have to go with this funding, it may be clearer that sometimes (not always) central management of some functions is the best option!

**CA:** The LA has statutory responsibilities to perform and requires some funding drawn from the Dedicated Schools Grant to do this. Devon has been a high delegator for a number of years (compared with other authorities) and over 90% of the DSG is delegated to schools. Some of the funding retained centrally at the start of the year is in fact allocated to schools during the year (examples include the funding of new statements as well as increases following annual review and also funding from contingency for increased rates bills or to meet significant emergencies in schools). Some subsidy of schools is also currently taken from central budgets such as the £500k added to special school budgets during 2008/9 and the ongoing subsidy towards the post JE costs of those catering staff who transferred to schools after the original JE implementation date. Each year as part of the budget process the relative share of the funding is reviewed and priorities determined. Current subsidies may not be affordable in the future.

#### **6. Can the Local Authority give any advice to schools on ways of saving money?**

**JB:** One of the best sources of advice is the recently published Audit Commission report that is on the DAG website or at <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/nationalstudies/localgov/Pages/valuablelessons.aspx>

**CA:** The LA also gives advice in a number of ways already and will continue to do so. These include advice over framework contracts available here: [http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/learningschools/schools/schools-services/schoolfinance/school\\_procurement/frameworks\\_contracts\\_database.htm](http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/learningschools/schools/schools-services/schoolfinance/school_procurement/frameworks_contracts_database.htm). Various sold services will help schools to identify savings, these may include finance advice, audit, human resources as well as advisers on workforce planning and remodelling accessed via the Learning & Development Partnership

**Ivan Godfrey:** The Commissioning Board receives regular presentations from Graham Newbery who is seconded to the DCSF to work on the OPEN (Online Procurement for Educational Needs) project. OPEN is a free, fully secure web-based buying tool designed specifically for schools. It enables them to access suppliers in one place. The DCSF has been piloting work with some schools within LLCs in Devon who are already benefiting from making their purchases through OPEN. Other schools are encouraged to take part. For further details contact Mandie Kirk at [mandie.kirk@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:mandie.kirk@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk) or phone her on 07825 105108. There is more information on the DAG website or at [www.dcsf.gov.uk/open](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/open)

**GA:** In addition to the Audit Commission report on best value and the guidance document for governors there is a toolkit available at the website given above. The Audit Commission has also developed a workforce tool for secondary schools. This tool supports schools in breaking down expenditure by subject and comparing expenditure with outcomes, to support assessments of the efficiency of workforce deployment. Finally, the Managing School Resources Toolkit provides schools with a structure for value for money discussions, and sign-posts some useful value for money resources. <http://www.schoolresources.audit-commission.gov.uk/>

#### **7. Does federation provide an opportunity to save money as the Audit Commission states?**

**Sue Clarke** (Strategic Lead for Achievement through Collaboration): Devon's experience is that federation does not bring immediate savings. However, it does maximise what is already in the systems especially to develop leadership capacity. Therefore federation is more about efficiency than economy.

#### **8. In what ways can federated schools offer efficiency savings?**

**CA:** Examples may include restructuring the way that support staff operate. Utilising the expertise of staff across all the schools in the federation could bring savings. Greater purchasing power can be achieved by working together to achieve a better price. Items of equipment can be shared between schools ... and one GB should be more efficient to operate than several. Some support service savings can also be achieved, e.g. charges for finance support.

#### **9. How can schools plan for future Broadband charges?**

**CA:** Such charges will be ongoing and schools will plan in the same way that they plan for other areas of expenditure

**Nick Pearce** (Lead Officer ICT Systems & Infrastructure): In this context, governors' attention is drawn to an important letter regarding any decision not to use SWGfL and the implications of this decision for responsibility for safeguarding (<http://www.devon.gov.uk/sc-oct0934026.pdf>). This is further commented on in Item 5

#### **10. How long does FMSiS accreditation last?**

**David Curnow:** FMSiS accreditation lasts for 3 years.

## **2. New OfSTED Framework, changes to the Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) and the role of SIPs** (see documents on website)

Full details of the new framework can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) Key elements of the changed process are:

- focus and frequency of school inspections changed to ensure they have greatest impact possible on school improvement and outcomes

- sharper focus on safeguarding (see later) plus effectiveness of engagement with parents (views of parents and pupils will also play a more significant role)
- a new 'partnership' grade with a specific focus on Community Cohesion
- a more in depth look at governance and value for money
- the sharpening of the 'capacity to improve' judgement
- more frequent inspections for inadequate / satisfactory schools + longer interval for good / outstanding ones
- no more 'light touch', one day, inspections
- inspectors will be able to support improvements in weaker schools, by visiting those that are not improving between their full inspections

Ofsted provided all schools with a new online SEF midway through July (<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse-all-by/Education-and-skills/Schools/Self-evaluation-and-the-SEF>). It was not expected that schools would have had this new SEF ready by September. The SEF has been streamlined to become, hopefully, a more useful and manageable tool for school improvement

DAG, DGS and NGA have all suggested that the new inspection regime raises the bar for success criteria ever higher and that more schools are likely to find themselves in an under-achieving category. NGA also points out that the new framework is controversial with its focus on a school's raw scores in test results and examinations, whereas the previous framework focused more on how a school compared with its peers

#### Governor comment

- ❖ *At one meeting the CoG of St John's Primary, Totnes, gave a very full account of his school's recent Ofsted (see document on website) stressing:*
  - *The way the inspection was conducted has changed a lot*
  - *The safeguarding agenda was narrower than expected with much emphasis on paperwork*
  - *OfSTED were looking for clear evidence that the school knew its local community and issues facing it*
  - *Early Years provision and the involvement of parents was looked at closely (see document on website)*
  - *There appeared to be an expectation that Governors have a lead role in schools and there was an implicit expectation that the CoG would be present*
  - *The whole issue of the capacity to improve was hugely significant - it is now about more than having a good track record*
  - *There are now two limiting grades relating to safeguarding and promoting equal opportunities*
  - *The pre-inspection briefing was very useful*
  - *A well-prepared GB should have nothing to fear from the new framework*
- ❖ *At another meeting, however, a CoG had not had such a happy experience with the new framework inspection at 48hrs notice and three months earlier than expected. It had been very rigorous with much emphasis on attainment levels and raw scores. The fact that the HT had rewritten the SEF to meet the new version without consulting widely had not helped!*
- ❖ *A number of governors asked about the consistency of OfSTED particularly given the fact that, for small schools, there might be just one or two inspectors. Some suggested that governors collate evidence of the way the inspectors work with a view to challenging their judgment if they are unhappy with it. This also begs the question of variance in results between cohorts of pupils ... and results which are almost meaningless for small schools / small cohorts of pupils. Often parents do not understand the reasons for such variance*
- ❖ *One school had formed a Governor Action Group when it had been named as a school causing concern. This group has kept going even though things have improved at the school so that any of these governors would now be well equipped to meet with OfSTED inspectors. Another school has a committee that concentrates solely on School Improvement*
- ❖ *Given the increased emphasis on the role of governors in understanding data and information provided in the HT's report (i.e. not just accepting it but understanding and questioning it) there was a very interesting discussion at one meeting on the governor role in monitoring standards. It was suggested that OfSTED will not only ask governors for information about standards and levels of achievement but also the extent to which they have gone on to challenge and question the HT robustly. Clerks need to ensure there is a minute detailing any such questioning as this represents the evidence that OfSTED will be looking for. One governor said that although the HT and GB appeared to have the necessary detailed information following work with the SIP, this was, in fact, not the information that OfSTED had wanted. As a result, they felt that they had had poor advice from the Education Authority and that, perhaps, the relationship with the SIP had been too cosy. It was suggested that it would be easy to fall in to the trap of relying too much on the SIP with governors not seeking sufficient clarification (see document re SIPs on website)*
- ❖ *In addition it was also suggested that OfSTED will look specifically as to whether governors are driving the strategic direction of school rather than being led. Again, minuting is critical. Finally, FMSiS requires a lot of evidence which, again, must be minuted*
- ❖ *In general governors present welcomed the SEF process, although it was time-consuming, and the input given by the SIPs. There was some degree of confusion, though, as to the different roles played by School Improvement Officers, School Advisers and School Improvement Partners*

- ❖ *One governor questioned the emphasis placed on safeguarding and equal opportunities rather than the development of learning skills*

**Don Paterson** (DAG Chair): At the NGA AGM and Conference on November 7<sup>th</sup> Christine Gilbert (Head of OfSTED) spoke about the new regime. She dealt with some **myths** about the new requirements. Two are particularly important;

- Achievement can be 'good' with poor attainment but outstanding progress. This can lead to an 'outstanding' category. 30 schools so far are in the lowest 'attainment' category and have an overall category of 'good'. Some inspectors have not understood this and therefore Ofsted are communicating with their contract inspection companies to put this right
- Whilst the central record is important for safeguarding, if all records are not in the same place **at present** and provided the evidence is available during the inspection the school will be OK. Eventually the central record will be essential. Of 120 schools placed in a failed category in the new regime so far only 6 are there because of safeguarding issues.

### Governor questions

**1. What happens when a CoG cannot be present for the inspection?**

**David Lowes** (Interim Lead for Schools and Settings Improvement and National Strategies Portfolio): This is unavoidable at times due to the short notice now provided by Ofsted to schools. It may be possible for the lead inspector to contact the CoG by telephone. Where this is not possible, it is appropriate for other members of the GB to meet the lead inspector. It is important therefore that all governors have a secure understanding of the school's work and the challenges it may be facing

**Gillian Allcroft** (Policy Officer NGA): NGA has said to GBs since the framework was introduced that they should ensure that the GB needs to be equipped to answer Ofsted questions if the CoG is not available

**2. Are governors always involved with the pre-inspection briefing?**

**DL:** No, the pre-inspection briefing is a document arising from a detailed conversation between the lead inspector and the HT

**3. Are governors graded under the new framework?**

**DL:** Yes. The effectiveness of the GB in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met is a judgement within leadership and management. Refer to p41 of the Ofsted Evaluation Schedule for Schools for full details of the criteria

**4. Can governors make a constructive challenge to the outcome of an OfSTED inspection ... and, if so, how?**

**DL:** Ofsted publish a complaints procedure and this is available on the Ofsted website

**5. How can governors develop skills with regard to monitoring standards?**

**DL:** Governors should have an understanding of the school's self-evaluation cycle and when the outcomes might be reported to them by the HT. Other information, such as SIP reports, will supplement the information governors receive. To fulfil the role of support and challenge, governors do need to know the questions they might ask in the context of their school. LDP Primary / Secondary / Special school phase advisers are able to provide purchased support to GBs and to tailor training to the needs of the individual GB

**6. Is the relationship between the SIP and the school 'too cosy'?**

**DL:** The SIP's role is to support and challenge the school to improve. Feedback from governors and HTs does not indicate that this relationship is 'cosy' and shows that schools feel challenged by SIPs who understand the context of the schools they are working with. Governors are always invited to take part in SIP meetings and have the opportunity to contribute to a robust professional dialogue

**GA:** The White Paper said the role of the SIP was to be strengthened and more emphasis placed on the need of GBs to have information from the SIP. Although this may already be happening in Devon in some areas the access of GBs to SIP information has been patchy. The SIP only has limited time in the school so the GB needs to ensure that it is receiving from the HT and other senior leaders the information it needs to monitor progress. There are usually training courses available from Governor Services about how to interpret data and undertake effective monitoring

**7. What is the deadline for schools to complete the new SEF?**

**DL:** Ofsted did not expect schools to complete the new SEF for September 2009 and there is no published deadline. During the autumn term, inspectors will use the most recent archived version of the SEF with whichever sections of the new one have been completed. In completing the new SEF, schools might wish to consider tackling the new judgements first

**3. BSF (Building Schools for Future), PCP (Primary Capital Programme) and Area Reviews** (see document on website)

These 2 programmes combined with the area reviews envisage not only a huge investment in capital spending but also a radical transformation of the way in which education will be delivered across the county. A very brief summary paper outlining what is involved with BSF and PCP was available at meetings. In addition governors were told:

- By 1st October the Capital Programme was transferred from DCSF to Partnership for Schools (PfS) to bring all capital funding strands under one organisation, the rationale being economies of scale, establishing protocols, sharing good practice and greater flexibility. An initiative to provide advice and Continuing Professional Development to schools commissioning building work was launched by Royal Institute of British Architects, supported by DCSF. Governors and HTs need to be alert to the initiative
- Devon's BSF 'Readiness to Deliver' submission date was brought forward to 17th Sept by Partnerships for Schools. Documents went to relevant schools for consideration and comment early in September. DCC Cabinet has approved the Local Authority element of revenue and capital funding for the first tranche schools (Ilfracombe, Chulmleigh, Tiverton, Marland, Dartmouth)
- The Memorandum of Understanding to be signed by governors of potential BSF schools will remain a keystone of the project and risk management strategy. The DAG Board is in the process of considering this
- The LA has developed a pack of standard documentation for the Area Review process and trialed this in late September with the Okehampton LLC Area Review. Following this the LA is evaluating and refining the detail before going to print and making the material available to HTs, governors and the education community. In this context governors are encouraged to look at 'Vision for Learning in Devon' which will help schools transform for the 21st Century. The Learning Development Partnership ( LDP ) and DCC are working with schools to transform learning in Devon radically and would welcome governor views. To comment on the Vision for Learning in Devon, visit [www.devon.gov.uk/bsf](http://www.devon.gov.uk/bsf) and follow the link to the 'Vision'
- Dartmouth (federated secondary and primary) have agreed to an informal consultation on the proposal to consider the creation of Devon's first (all-through) Academy
- NGA has expressed real concern that the considerable growth in pupils numbers in some urban areas might lead to funding being diverted just to meet statutory obligations

#### Governor comment

- ❖ *There was scepticism that these programmes would continue given the current financial situation*
- ❖ *Frustration was expressed by a governor of one secondary school originally towards the top of the list for the BSF initiative whose school no longer features within the planned programme*

**Vic Ebdon** (Head of Strategic Planning): In our capital programme proposals for 2008/9 we included an "Advance Design Fees" budget for a number of school campus development plans. Some governors and HTs were under the impression that this was the BSF priority list although there was no basis for coming to this conclusion as the ADF had been identified to help with school plans where known issues existed. There were animated discussions about the eventual prioritisation but these were about the process. The fact is that there was only ever one list of proposed BSF phase 1 projects that emanated from the prioritisation process. This was published with the November 08 Executive report and has not changed since.

- ❖ *Some governors wanted to be involved in the Area Reviews but felt that this was unlikely to happen. At one meeting, however, one governor had attended the first area review meeting and had been frustrated at the lack of progress and reluctance of many present to 'seize the opportunity'. The process may be lengthier than anticipated!*

**David Tall:** Current planning for LLC Area Reviews for the next 2 terms is as follows:

- |                                       |  |                        |
|---------------------------------------|--|------------------------|
| • Exeter Beacon, West Exe and Central | Monday 16 <sup>th</sup> November       | Exeter Race Course     |
| • Torrington                          | Friday 4 <sup>th</sup> December        | The Plough Arts Centre |
| • South Molton                        | Thursday 21 <sup>st</sup> January 2010 | Venue tbc              |
| • Barnstaple                          | Thursday 11 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2010     | Venue tbc              |
| • Bideford                            | Thursday 11 March 2010                 | Venue tbc              |
| • Axe Valley                          | Thursday 24 <sup>th</sup> March 2010   | Venue tbc              |

I am representing DAG at each meeting to provide overall continuity but would be pleased to see local Governors at appropriate meetings. They should let me know if they wish to attend and I will liaise

**Debbie Clapshaw** (Manager Governor Support / Change Manager within Strategic Planning): Each school is entitled to bring along one governor to the Area Review meetings. Please note that we cannot open it up to more simply because of the logistics and numbers involved - these are already very big meetings! To date we have had one Area Review meeting in Okehampton where HTs, governors, LA Officers, Diocesan and Children's Trust representatives were all present and all contributed robustly to the discussions and outcomes

## Governor questions

### 1. Are all political parties committed to the vision inherent within the PCP and BSF programmes?

**Chris Dyer** (Acting Deputy Head Strategic Planning): It is not possible to judge with accuracy cross party commitment to the above initiatives. However the new county council administration are supportive of the Area Review process and the Conservative party nationally have produced a booklet titled "rural action" which contains many similarities with Devon's PCP strategy for change

**VE:** DCC met on the 2nd November with Partnerships for Schools (PfS - the DCSF's delivery agents for all capital programmes) and they confirmed that they are committing resources for BSF into future years. We conclude from this that they have reached agreement with the Treasury and the Conservative Party that capital investment in schools will be maintained at a very high level in the next Comprehensive Spending Review period. The transfer of all capital funding streams to PfS also means that they will exploit opportunities to join up funding streams where objectives overlap (such as federated schools in BSF).

### 2. What challenges do governors face in dealing with both the BSF and PCP initiatives?

**CD:** Both the above initiatives are promoted as part of the government's transformational change agenda and therefore governors, HTs and the LA are challenged to consider radical solutions to create sustainable patterns of schooling. With the benefit of having undertaken the first Area Review the potential challenges for governors are:

- ❖ Considering cross LLC options that will benefit a number of schools rather than an individual school
- ❖ Ensuring they are aware and familiar with the LLC data sets (currently with HTs). **This is important information which all GBs should have the opportunity to discuss. DAG is keen to ensure that governors are well informed and able to play a full and equal part in the Area Review discussions. To facilitate this it is essential that the data is shared, discussed and explored at an early stage by HTs within their own GB meetings** (for more details read <http://www.devon.gov.uk/sc-nov0937030.pdf>)
- ❖ Ensuring that they are familiar with the range of potential alternatives (i.e. federations, collaborations, trusts etc) prior to the Area Review day. Following the first review the LA team are currently working on producing this information for governors in advance of LLC reviews

**VE:** The BSF programme will place extra demands on school managers so resources will need to be made available to ensure the full participation of staff, governors, pupils and community. There are also long-term financial commitments that governors will need to agree. The issues have been set out broadly in the Memorandum of Understanding that has already been circulated through the School Organisation Forum

### 3. How are governors involved in the Area Review process?

**CD:** Governors are considered instrumental in this process. Each CoG will receive an invite to the Area Review day together with a hard copy of what is considered essential reading material prior to the review. Every LLC governor will also receive a letter via the GB Clerk advising them of the review and encouraging them to offer comment via either the HT or CoG who will both participate on the review day. In addition the LA review team will continue to advise and inform the School Organisation Forum (SOF - on which DAG is represented) of progress and outcomes of LLC reviews. DAG is also undertaking to send an independent representative to attend each Area Review and propose to produce an independent report on observations

## 4. Local Learning Community ( LLC ) Partnership Working, Collaboration and Federation

- There is an increased emphasis on schools working together emanating from the recent White Paper, the new OfSTED framework, financial pressures, the Area Review process etc
- The **2009 Education Profile Datasets** in LLC groupings are available online via a password which HTs hold (see Chris Dyer's response to question 2 in Item 3 above and <http://www.devon.gov.uk/sc-nov0937030.pdf>). CoGs are invited to sign up to a protocol prior to accessing the data, as some data will need to be treated with sensitivity. They will only be able to access the dataset for the LLC within which their own school sits. The data offers a broad picture with regard to numbers on roll and pupil forecasting, standards, ICT, school premises etc and is an extremely useful document for identifying trends and assisting in future planning. This data will have been checked by HTs for accuracy
- This year's 4 **Achievement through Collaboration Conferences** (Mon 23rd Nov to Thu 26th Nov) have a different structure - their prime purpose being to bring together school leaders and Local Children's Trust (LCT) partners for a structured dialogue about local priorities and action planning. The LA values governor presence at these conferences and is keen that governors are actively engaged in the development of LCTs. However, for this year only, they have had to make some hard decisions on numbers attending the conferences and have restricted numbers to 2 governor representatives per LLC. Governors interested in attending on behalf of their LLC should pass their name (through their HT) to the LLC Chair who will decide how local GBs are represented. For further information contact Sue Newson: [sue.newson@devon.gov.uk](mailto:sue.newson@devon.gov.uk)

- Prior to the area meetings one school asked for the issue of the ever-increasing workload of HTs in all schools and particularly small schools to be addressed. It was felt that an unsustainable combination of paperwork and teaching load made it increasingly difficult for HTs to be effective leaders
- Sustainable and formalised partnerships between schools are the key to providing the framework for maximising resources already in the system. Federation is one partnership model for achieving this. Devon already has 22 schools working within federations (24 from January). A Federation Open Week is taking place during the week beginning Monday Nov. 9<sup>th</sup>. A flyer with detailed information was sent to all schools and governors were invited to make contact and go along to see what is involved
- As a footnote, the GB of Sparkwell Primary School in South Devon agreed earlier this year that, **in the best interests of the pupils, parents and staff**, the school should close with effect from the end of the summer term 2009. The reasons for closure were:
  - the lack of sustainability of the school for the future given the substantial fall in numbers on roll during the past few years and the requirement to deliver a full and balanced curriculum
  - the resultant difficulties experienced in attracting suitably qualified experienced staff to permanent positions, including that of HT
 In addition, the options looked into by the GB for the future of the school in relation to partnership and collaboration did not secure the legal day-to-day leadership and statutory requirements and did not comply with the staffing guidance under section 36(8) of the Education Act 2002.

#### Governor comment

- ❖ *A number of governors commented that they felt they had a very limited link within their LLC and were not 'in there with a voice'. If Devon wishes to see LLCs grow in their influence the governors need a structured in-put and to know how to achieve this. One governor asked "How can a governor get involved if (s)he is constantly joined at the hip to their HT?!"*

**David Tall:** The DAG Board recognises this issue. David Tall and two of the AOs met Sue Clarke and Debbie Clapshaw on November 5<sup>th</sup> to discuss it. Don Paterson, Pam Barnard and David Tall are meeting the HTs' Associations on November 13<sup>th</sup> to discuss this issue too.
- ❖ *Some governors had felt that last year's data sets were very inaccurate but that, once sorted out, they would prove to be very useful*
- ❖ *At none of the meetings did any governor know exactly which governors from their LLC would be attending the Collaboration Conferences nor how they had been chosen*
- ❖ *At all meetings there were governors present who had experienced federation. Without exception they all felt it had been a positive process. Comments included:*
  - *(West Exmoor Federation) Federation had definitely been good for both children and staff as the transition to secondary school worked better. Benefits also included greater opportunities for accelerated learning for some pupils, children developing a wider circle of friends, having a mini-bus to facilitate visits and rapidly gaining the enthusiastic support of parents*
  - *(First Federation - CoG) There had been 'no down side'. Having a smaller GB (13) had proved more effective. The GB held one termly meeting as a full GB and had a powerful strategic leadership group which met once a month. Video conferencing also played a useful role. Governors represented all four schools and each parent governor was linked to a school at which (s)he did not have a child. The Business Manager and the clerk were really key, important players for the federation*
  - *(First Federation - Staff Governor) It had been a positive experience for teaching staff to work in big and small schools and to have the opportunity to work / share ideas with a much larger group of colleagues*
  - *(First Federation - former CoG of a recently joined school) It had been 'all good news' - there had been a positive impact on the whole team, teachers and pupils. Workloads were smaller but more concentrated.*
  - *(South Hams Federation) Parents had overcome identity issues quite quickly and, although they missed having their own HT initially they quickly warmed to the role and responsibilities of the Heads of Teaching and Learning. Ultimately everyone had been stimulated by working together*
- ❖ *Many other governors present at meetings expressed considerable interest in the concept of federation. Some felt it was the 'only way to go', and a question of not 'if' but 'when'. They did perceive, however, a major difficulty in selling the idea to parents and reluctant governors in other schools*
- ❖ *There was concern expressed that the diocesan authorities were trying to make federation more difficult for church schools*

**Don Paterson** (DAG Chair): There may be some disquiet amongst governors that officers and HTs are making the running in the areas covered by this item and the previous one. My view is that there is a need for all governors to sense that we are at the early stages of what may well prove to be a rapid stepped change in the organisation of education. If handled well this will lead to a far better experience for our youngsters and enable us to carry the drive to the improvement of performance across the LA. The imperatives are coming from outside of the LA and it is important that governors make it a matter of personal pride that they have made certain that they are in a position to both discuss and decide so that they can ensure that they are at the centre of decision making. We all need to obtain the data for our area, meet with our colleagues, form a view and be able to discuss with the LA and our HTs in a knowledgeable manner. Not to do this means that we will miss the boat!

## Governor questions

### 1. How can governors become more involved with collaborative work within their LLCs?

**Debbie Clapshaw** (Manager Governor Support / Change Manager within Strategic Planning): DGS met with two of the three new DAG Area Officers recently. Their role will be pivotal in getting LLC governor networks off the ground. We are also meeting with remodelling consultants (ARCS) to see how their role might be expanded to include areas of work to do with governor networks. I think there could be positive moves in this area in the coming months but we must beware of raising expectations too high initially!

### 2. How do governors know who is representing them at the Collaboration Conferences?

**Sue Clarke** (Strategic Lead for Achievement through Collaboration): We are very limited for space this year and deeply regret that we are unable to issue an open invitation to all governors. Chairs of LLCs have provided us with governor representation (this has been a local decision) and DAG is also sending representatives

### 3. Is 'loose' federation still a possibility?

**SC:** We would prefer to refer to this as 'collaboration' and many schools already work collaboratively with a range of partners and can and will continue to do so. Collaboration does not deliver the potential for sharing resources in the way that a formal and legal hard federation does

**Gillian Allcroft** (Policy Officer NGA): There is legally no such thing. You either federate (i.e. formally join together under one GB) or you can use the collaboration regulations to collaborate on specific issues. DCSF have a federations website which may be useful - <http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/federations/>

### 4. What is the role of the Business Manager in a federation and what qualities do they need?

**SC:** The School Business Manager (SBM) role has many formats depending on the federation. I would recommend that governors visit federations during the open week to find out first hand! The National College of School Leadership (NCSL) also has a lot of information about the role on their website

(<http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/docinfo?id=17367&filename=school-business-managers-full-report.pdf>). We have two SBM national pilot projects underway in Devon. Once this work is further developed it might be useful for DAG to follow up on their experience

### 5. How does OfSTED inspect federated schools? Do they visit each school separately or the whole federation?

**SC:** Our experience in Devon has shown a lack of consistency in the way that federations have been inspected and we have raised this with the DCSF. The new White Paper states that in the future there will be a more coordinated approach to the inspection of federations. We have not as yet been told what this will look like

**GA:** At present Ofsted does inspect each school separately, but is looking to make inspections of federations more coherent

### 6. Is there any difficulty in VA schools federating with Community schools?

**DC:** Legally there is no difficulty with VA (or VC) schools federating with community schools, and we already have many examples across Devon of where this has happened very successfully. The federated GB takes the responsibilities for the VA aspect of governance associated with premises, staffing, admissions and RE

**GA:** Legally the two can federate although it does present some challenges:

- In VA schools the GB is the employer, whereas in Community schools the LA is the employer
- VA schools also have an over-arching trust

### 7. What is the attitude of the Diocesan authorities to federation?

**DC:** The C of E Diocese of Exeter has been very supportive of federation to date, and we have worked very closely with our Diocesan colleagues on all of the information we have produced, and on all of the federations involving church schools.

**Alyson Sheldrake** (Diocesan Director of Education): The Diocesan Board of Education is currently producing a position paper giving advice and guidance for those schools considering federation

## 5. Safeguarding Issues including Safer Recruitment

The case of Baby Peter and the accompanying media furore has catapulted this issue to the forefront of matters to be tackled by schools.

- Devon was one of the first counties to be inspected in June and July under the tough new Ofsted framework set up following the death of Baby Peter. During a 2-week inspection 6 inspectors reviewed and reported upon Devon's safeguarding and looked-after children services having looked at all arrangements provided by DCC, its schools, the NHS, the police, and other statutory and voluntary agencies for keeping Devon's 164,000 children and young people safe. They said overall effectiveness of services for the 550 looked-after children in Devon was good with good capacity to get even better and confirmed there had been significant improvements in safeguarding, which was now adequate, since the last inspection in 2006
- **Helen Dickson** (Schools' Personnel Team Manager): With effect from 1st January 2010, the GB must ensure that:

- (a) any person who interviews an applicant for any post under these Regulations has completed the safer recruitment training; or
- (b) in the case where:
  - (i) a selection panel is appointed for that purpose under regulation 15 or 26; or
  - (ii) the GB delegates the appointment of a member of staff to two or more governors or one or more governors and the HT under regulation 4(1) at least one member of that panel or group has completed the safer recruitment training
- The original recommendation from DCSF was that each school should have HT + 1 governor trained. This is a minimum requirement and schools may wish to ensure a number of governors and senior staff have been trained. After Jan 1<sup>st</sup> any appointments made without someone trained on the interview panel (i.e HT and/or governor) will be illegal. It is therefore important that every HT and at least one governor should have undertaken Safer Recruitment Training by Jan 1<sup>st</sup>
- To access training:
  - Online - available from the beginning of November when it will be found on the Children's Workforce Development Council website (moved from the NCSL website). Governors will 'self-register' rather than having to go through the HT. It will also be possible for all members of the GB who so wish to undertake the training. The content and format of training is not changing, only the hosting arrangements.
  - Governors were informed of 2 additional courses held in early November this term. There will be further courses next term, but after the January deadline!
- In addition schools received a letter (<http://www.devon.gov.uk/sc-sept0929011.doc>) asking them to have completed and returned by October 23rd an audit of statutory duties and associated responsibilities for schools in relation to 'Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education' (DCSF 2006). The purpose of this audit is to ensure that all schools in Devon are meeting their statutory requirements in relation to Safeguarding. Each school should have the following in place:
  - A written safeguarding policy and up to date child protection procedures that have been agreed with the GB. (Model documents are available from the EWS website)
  - A Senior Designated Person (SDP) role established and deputy / deputies identified
  - A nominated governor (preferably not the CoG) to champion child protection issues
  - Other safeguarding procedures, including dealing with allegations against members of staff and safer working practice (code of conduct)
  - Training at the appropriate level for all staff and volunteers
  - Robust staff recruitment and selection processes which safeguard children
- Effective communication and appropriate sharing of information is crucial to ensure children and young people get the best services possible. **ContactPoint** is intended as a national directory / index listing all children across England. ContactPoint provides trained professionals with security clearance (e.g nominated teachers, nurses and youth workers) with a straightforward directory to find out quickly who else is working with a child. The team can be contacted on 01392 382770 or email [contact@devon.gov.uk](mailto:contact@devon.gov.uk) and also at the Devon Children's Trust website. A letter from the LA (<http://www.devon.gov.uk/sc-july0928003.pdf>) explains the security issues involved

#### Governor comment

- ❖ *One governor understood the emphasis placed on safeguarding but questioned whether it should appear to replace the development of learning skills as the major focus of inspections*
- ❖ *A number of governors commented that demands by the media for 'something to be done' to ensure that a Baby Peter scenario should never recur led inevitably to a huge amount of paperwork and bureaucracy – and felt frustrated when the same media organs then criticised the paperwork and bureaucracy involved*
- ❖ *One governor reported that the Safer Recruitment Training was a 'heavy' day and another considered it 'the worst day's training I have ever attended'. However, another governor said that the training did throw up some gaps that a GB had been asking and yet another that the training had highlighted the importance of asking at interview about a candidate's motivation and trying to get into the person'*
- ❖ *One HT governor regretted the tight deadline for the safeguarding audit pointing out that CYPS need to appreciate that schools have their own deadlines which are at least equally important!*
- ❖ *Governors mentioned that the ContactPoint scheme is continually getting deferred and some questioned whether it would provide any additional information or give any additional support to those children it is intended to help*

#### Governor questions

1. **If the HT is trained in Safer Recruitment why is there a need for governors to be trained?**

**Beverley Dubash** (Principal Education Welfare Officer): There needs to be at least one governor trained because the HT Teacher may not sit on every interview panel (in which case the governor will fulfil the legal

requirement that at least one person on the panel has been trained) and it is considered good practice that at least one member of the GB has an understanding of safer recruitment practice

2. **Are the Safeguarding Policy and the Child Protection Policy not in fact both the same thing? This is not clear in the letter under reference**

**BD:** The term 'safeguarding policy' is one apparently preferred by Ofsted. My view is that it is not exactly the same as a child protection policy. The latter clearly relates to the rather narrower issue of how the school responds to child protection. A safeguarding policy would encompass a much broader range of issues (anti-bullying, safe internet use etc). If a school wishes to re-badge its child protection policy as a safeguarding policy it would at least need to refer to all its other policies which relate to safeguarding in the main policy document

3. **Why should the CoG preferably not be the governor with responsibility for Child Protection?**

**BD:** I believe that the thinking behind this is that the CoG may not have sufficient time to dedicate to the safeguarding agenda on top of all their other responsibilities.

4. **Is there a template as to how to go about wording requests for references?**

**Helen Dickson:** A pro-forma is available on the Schools' Personnel Service Policies webpage.

**BD:** In the DfES Guidance 'Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education' paras 4.30 - 4.36 there is guidance on what should be included in the reference request.

5. **Has ContactPoint been deferred yet again?**

**Answer to follow**

6. **What additional information and support will ContactPoint provide to those working with children?**

**Answer to follow**

**Safeguarding Online** Governors' attention is drawn to an important letter regarding any decision not to use SWGfL and the implications of this decision for responsibility for safeguarding (<http://www.devon.gov.uk/sc-oct0934026.pdf>). The key paragraph states: *If after serious consideration your school decides to discontinue the SWGfL connection, I will expect the school to procure an alternative provider who has an equal or better service than SWGfL. To fulfil the authority's safeguarding responsibilities, and also to support schools, if challenged, to demonstrate their compliance, I will require the CoG to explain to me in writing exactly what provision will be in place for the teaching, learning and safeguarding of the children in the school.* It is vitally important that any school that has decided to change from SWGfL or is planning to do so read this letter in full.

## **6. Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency in Schools**

- The Schools' Funding Group (SFG) and the Schools' Organisation Forum (SOF) have both discussed schools' participation in the Carbon Reduction Commitment. Schools stand to lose out if they do not go about improving energy management and 'behaviour' and governors play a key role in resourcing and promoting good practice.
- DCC has established a Scrutiny Task and Finish group (unusually combining CYPS and Environment) on carbon reduction and schools. This has been set up in response to the Climate Change Bill which has introduced a long term legally binding framework to tackle climate change. In addition to setting national emission reduction targets the Bill introduces a mandatory cap and trade system (carbon trading) on organisations whose annual electricity consumption from half hourly-metered supplies exceed 6000MWh. This will start in April 2010 and includes Devon County Council. Thus
  - Carbon Trading will effectively entail the Council being charged for every tonne of carbon it produces
  - The UK Climate Change Act requires an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 from 1990 levels
  - **The County Council is in a position of being financial accountable for carbon emissions produced by schools, which account for almost 50% of the Council's total emissions. However schools will maintain their autonomy with a duty for reasonable assistance**

The Task & Finish Group has been receiving representations from schools and making recommendations aimed at fostering sensible cooperation between schools and the authority regarding the new legislation – contact [helen.nicholson@devon.gov.uk](mailto:helen.nicholson@devon.gov.uk) for further details
- There are numerous sources of grant funding to aid schools in promoting energy efficiency. One recently circulated was the **Ashden Awards for Energy Efficiency** (deadline for applications 24<sup>th</sup> November) - see [www.ashdenawards.org](http://www.ashdenawards.org) or contact David Tall for further details

Governor comment

- ❖ *Governors who had attended a recent training seminar on energy efficiency were very positive about the presentation and had come to realise how important an issue this is for schools*
- ❖ *There is a huge breadth of knowledge amongst governors on this issue – some spoke very knowledgeably whilst others needed guidance on the most basic issues*
- ❖ *Many governors felt that there was, indeed, a lot of money available for energy efficiency but would like guidance on how to set about obtaining support. A number had heard of the Green Challenge Fund*
- ❖ *One knowledgeable governor emphasised that the key thing was to get energy efficiency done first as there is a requirement already to target information about how much is currently being used. Very few present at meetings knew about the radical incentives available from 2010 onwards when the LA has to buy carbon credits. If schools under-use carbon credits they will get credits. If they over-use them they will be penalised. It was pointed out that start up costs would be expensive*
- ❖ *Schools are being encouraged to look at simple things at the moment such as roof insulation*
- ❖ *One governor reminded schools that they needed to give their own meter readings to enable them to use these as a baseline for efficiency*
- ❖ *Comments from meetings varied considerably as to the value for money offered by NPS and its offer to support with Energy Certificates. At one meeting the effectiveness of the arrangements with NPS was questioned with several anecdotes of poor service from NPS. It was suggested that there are alternative providers though there was further anecdotal evidence of poor quality service with these and it was emphasised that governors need to ensure that they use fully accredited and reliable providers*

#### **Governor questions**

**1. Can governors please have a simple briefing sheet detailing what the requirements are for energy efficiency?**

**Vic Ebdon** (Head of Strategic Planning): We are in the process of preparing the first of what will be a series of information leaflets and this will be done soon after the conclusion of the work of the Member Task and Finish group on November 11th

**2. Can governors have guidance as to where they can apply for financial support to undertake work leading to increased energy efficiency?**

**VE:** This will be included in the information leaflet(s). In the meantime the Energy Savings Trust website is a good place to start – [www.energysavingstrust.org.uk](http://www.energysavingstrust.org.uk)

**3. If governors are not satisfied with the service provided by NPS what should they do?**

**VE:** They should report their concerns directly and formally to the NPS Project Manager overseeing their work or alternatively write directly to the Managing Director, Steve Daw ([steve.daw@nps.co.uk](mailto:steve.daw@nps.co.uk)). For work commissioned by the LA as part of the Council's Capital Programme, schools should in the first instance contact the Project Officer from the Strategic Planning Group in CYPS

**4. Do schools have to use NPS?**

**VE:** If schools are spending only their Devolved Formula Capital they do not have to use NPS but in procuring any capital works they need to be mindful of the need to ensure compliance with Financial regulations and all relevant statutory and health and safety requirements. In commissioning NPS the large majority of governor risk is borne by NPS

#### **7. Political Party Policies**

NGA had asked that governor views / questions about Conservative educational policy be sought in the light of next year's election and their proposals to make significant changes to current arrangements. Inevitably education will feature extensively in discussions in advance of the election. For the benefits of all it is important that the policies and promises of all the main political parties are in the public arena so that those in education understand their implication. In this context it would be helpful to pull together comments / questions from governors to be addressed to **all** the main political parties about their future education policies and commitments.

#### *Governor comment*

- ❖ *Education is constantly changing and new ideas are never given a chance to settle in. However, there appears to be an appetite for change so schools may be in for another turbulent time. It would be nice to avoid massive changes of direction*

### Governor questions

The list below has emerged partly from meetings and partly from e-mailed questions passed to DAG since the round of Area Meetings. In that period we have also received a copy of a 'mini-manifesto' from Michael Gove, Conservative Shadow Secretary for Education and copies of various speeches / statements from Labour education ministers. DAG is currently discussing with NGA the best way to take forward the question of developing a full and open education debate in advance of the election. The questions below will go in to that debate ... and others will be welcome

1. **Is free nursery provision going to continue?**
2. **What will happen to the planned investment in new buildings under BSF and PCP?**
3. **Will the ContactPoint scheme continue?**
4. **Will there be any change in CRB arrangements and the planned move to the Vetting & Barring Scheme?**
5. **What will happen to Diplomas which have had, it is true, a difficult time but have not yet had the chance to bed in?**
6. **Given that schools are deemed to be successful or otherwise according to their SATS, GCSE and 'A' level results how can such a judgement be valid given that the more academically able students are continually allowed to be creamed off into grammar schools? The statistics are bound to be in favour of the grammar schools, are they not? This is therefore not a like with like comparison and is thus a complete nonsense - yet schools are still judged to be successful (or not) based on the academic results of their students. Why?**

### 8. The National roll out of One-to-one tuition

This is funding to deliver tuition for pupils falling behind in English or Maths in all year groups in KS 2 + 3 and in National Challenge Schools in KS4 (contact [emma.hitchins@devon.gov.uk](mailto:emma.hitchins@devon.gov.uk) for more details)

#### Governor comment

- ❖ *One governor present remarked that this was an example of really worthwhile spending on education*
- ❖ *A number of governors were not familiar with this initiative*

**Ivan Godfrey:** Since the area meetings there has been considerable publicity about the success of the results of the pilot study into the effects of one-to-one tuition for numeracy. The results showed that 2,621 of the lowest achieving six- and seven-year-olds, many from poor backgrounds, made almost 14 months progress on average after just 20 hours specialist one-to-one or small-group tuition - four times the normal rate of progress. None of the children in the pilot were predicted to reach expected levels for maths when they started the lessons – but research on the impact by Edge Hill University, which runs the programme, found that nearly three-quarters were up to speed by the time they were seven. An encouraging success story!

### Governor questions

#### 1. Where does the money come from for this?

**David Lowes** (Interim Lead for Schools and Settings Improvement and National Strategies Portfolio): The 1:1 funding comes directly from the DCSF - Standards Fund 1.5. The programme and funding is completely separate from the National Strategies. All Devon schools have been provided with a funding allocation for the current academic year based on data provided by the data assessment team. All Devon secondary schools have taken up the offer of funding ... and all primary schools except 4

#### 2. How do schools apply for the money?

**DL:** They don't! Schools have been approached as explained above. Emma Hitchins is the LA contact

## B Issues offering just Governor Feedback Comments

### 9. DAG News

- During the summer DAG appointed 3 Area Officers ( AOs ) to offer a more local service to GBs. Their details are on the first page of this document. They took up appointments on 1<sup>st</sup> September. DAG is also pleased to announce the appointment of 3 Researchers, who will coordinate responses to the many consultations to which DAG is invited to contribute, but until now has not had the capacity to respond. This has been a considerable weakness in our support for education in the round, locally and nationally. The new officers, Ann Inman, Abel Nyamapfene and Sue Roberts will also link in to the 3 areas. Be prepared for contact from both Area and Research Officers as appropriate!
- Feedback on the Intermediary Governor (IG) scheme has been very positive – DAG would like to have an IG in every Devon school and one of the AO roles is to help achieve this. The IG's role is to forward any relevant information to fellow governors. Does your school have an IG? Does (s)he pass on information you need?
- Feedback from the 2009 DAG Conference Sat 4<sup>th</sup> July at County Hall indicated it was both very useful and interesting. The date of the 2010 Conference is 8<sup>th</sup> May at County Hall. Any thoughts from governors about possible presentations / workshops + any additional feedback about this year's conference is welcome
- DAG has been invited to give a presentation to the NGA Winter Conference on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2010 in London. This is not the usual members' conference, but an event for professionals who work with GBs. Aimed at governor services' managers, school improvement partners and others whose professional role brings them into contact with governors, this event will celebrate good practice and allow people to peek over the walls of the professional silos and acquire a comprehensive understanding of the various groups who work with governors and GBs (see [www.nga.org.uk/events.aspx](http://www.nga.org.uk/events.aspx)). This is a real feather in the DAG cap!  
**Clare Collins (Chair NGA): I gather that all continues to thrive in Devon and that you are proving to be a model association which is much appreciated by the National Governors' Association**
- Congratulations to Ian Courtney (CoG, Okehampton College) for his success as SW Governor of the Year
- A Governor vacancy exists on the Schools' Organisational Forum and the Schools' Commissioning Board. **These vacancies need urgent attention.** If you wish to be a member of one of these important groups or to know more about their work please contact David Tall
- JE - it was expected that following the recent Informal Appeals by the nominated Clerks that a final decision would have been made by now. DAG reminds GBs that as part of the process, the Appellant Group, supported by DAG developed an updated more realistic Job Description. Whilst it is, at first sight, a very challenging document it is a realistic presentation of the extremely onerous duties and responsibilities our Clerks are required and expected to undertake to ensure GBs are properly advised. It also reflects the proper role of a Clerk as envisaged in the White Paper issued on 30 June 2009

*Governor comment*

- ❖ *Governors who had attended the conference sang its praises and regretted that there had not been a much higher level of attendance*
- ❖ *At each meeting the AO for the area introduced herself and spoke of the role, emphasising her desire to support GBs within that area and open up channels of communication*
- ❖ *One governor felt it was unbelievable that there was still no news re JE / Clerks and hoped the wait would be worth it!*

#### **David Tall:**

- ❖ **National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH)** The NPQH programme, which from April 2009 became a mandatory qualification for headship, has changed dramatically and requires far more involvement from supporting HTs involved in assisting trainees to gain the qualification. Applicants must aspire to take up a headship post within a year to 18 months of applying, have the full support of their HT or line manager and must be almost ready without too many gaps in their understanding of the role. Some schools (Good or Outstanding ones) will be invited to be host schools. The advantage of being a host school is that you get a senior member of staff to work on one aspect of your school development plan e.g. collection of and analysis of data. You also have the offer of training courses etc. for free. The existing HT has to endorse the application, which requires evidence of expertise and experience, and write a supporting statement. The applicant, if successful, then attends a two day assessment and development event to see if they are ready before being formally accepted on to the NPQH programme. Thereafter, they may graduate at the end of the Development stage which lasts between 4 and 12 months
- ❖ **Every Child Matters** There are 5 documents on the DAG website (<http://www.dag.gb.com/latestnews.htm>) dealing with the 5 aspects of the ECM initiative and assisting governors in making an assessment of progress they are making in addressing these issues. We have these courtesy of the East Riding Association of Governing Bodies. DAG is most grateful to the East Riding for this excellent example of cooperation
- ❖ **Behaviour / School Report Cards:** I have comprehensive documents on both of these issues. On the first the DCSF directs readers to a series of different sites and aims to bring together the key documents and resources which are available to support schools to improve behaviour and attendance. On the second I have a 5 page brief from the NGA about the School Report Card, which comes into force in 2011 after a two year pilot. A 58 page document can be retrieved from the DCSF website keying in School Report Card. The value of that document is that there is an example of a completed record card on the final page which you might find useful. Your school may already have received a copy of the report entitled a "School Report Card: Prospectus". 2011 seems a long time away and you will have more pressing issues to deal with currently, but the Report Card will have an impact on your Ofsted and early preparation may be useful. Please contact me if you would like detailed copies of this information

#### **10. Training**

Governors are reminded to consult the middle pages of this term's Devon Governor for the Spring Term 2010 training dates. To book a place on any DGS training courses telephone 01392 383613 or visit: [www.devonldp.org](http://www.devonldp.org)

#### *Governor comment*

- ❖ *Governors often seem reluctant to attend training and advice from others as to how to encourage this would be welcome*
- ❖ *Governors were advised to consider buying in DGS for a whole GB training session and / or also getting together with other schools within their LLC to buy in DGS for training*

#### **11. Early Years Update: Devon's Learning Journey Transition Document Summer 2009** (see document on website)

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is now well established in schools and early years' settings. The EYFS contains a requirement for 'continuity and coherence' when sharing information about children's learning and achievement. In order to comply with this the LA has introduced one, shared transition document across the County for children who are moving from early years settings to reception classes. Schools received these new transition documents for children entering reception classes in September 2009. Pre-school settings are required to use the transition document as part of their registration agreement with the LA and it is hoped that all nursery classes will also use it. Schools receive copies electronically and all documentation can be downloaded from <http://www.deseducation.org/v.asp?level2id=209&level3=2050&rootid=17&level2=209&depth=3&folderid=2050>

In addition:

- Maintained nurseries are expected to offer increased flexibility for families, i.e. move away from traditional pattern of only offering a.m / p.m sessions. Parents may need all day provision or times that fit with part time study and work times.
- There is an increase in the amount of 'free' time that children are funded to attend. From September 2010 all eligible 3 + 4 years olds are entitled to 15 hours a week - the current offer is 12.5 hours with some areas that are more disadvantaged already being funded to offer the extra 2.5 hours

- By April 2010 the LA will have a new single funding formula for all early years' providers - the way that nursery provision is funded in Devon will change significantly for schools. The formula currently used funds the nursery based on its size / capacity – in future children will be funded on the actual hours that they attend
- Families should be encouraged and supported to take up the full entitlement. Transition times or sessions should be arranged BEFORE children become eligible for funding which is based on the January census
- From April 2009 those nurseries that have unfilled places can charge parents that would like to 'buy' extra time. Any school interested in doing this should contact their finance officer. When the new funding formula begins school nurseries can charge for hours that a child attends in excess of the free entitlement
- The Early Years and Childcare Service website is under review with improvements planned. Much of the detail of the single funding formula and flexible offer is available on the site. Visit [www.devon.gov.uk/eyef](http://www.devon.gov.uk/eyef)
- Copy of Devon Nursery News is emailed regularly from the EY and Childcare team to schools

*Governor comment*

- ❖ *Schools have had to deal with a lot of changes with regard to Early Years!*

## C Additional Issues / Information

### **12. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools – the government White Paper** (see document on website)

The DCSF White Paper published at the end of June: 'Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future – Building a 21st Century Schools System' is available at [www.dcsf.gov.uk/21stcenturyschoolssystem](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/21stcenturyschoolssystem) A copy of the letter from Ed Balls together with comments from the LA, Debbie Clapshaw and the NGA can be found in the linked papers to this meeting on the DAG website. It is important to look ahead to some of the legislation that might come from the White Paper.

### **13. The Devon Learning and Development Partnership (LDP)**

This was formed in April 2009 and brings together eleven DCC services. LDP comprises: Devon Discovery, Devon Education Services (including Governor Support), Devon Learning Resources, Devon Music Service, Educational Psychology Service, Education Welfare Service, English as an Additional Language Service, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Achievement, Inclusion Reintegration and Education other than at School, School Library Service, Support and Advisory Teacher Service.

The purpose of LDP is to work with others to improve outcomes for young people by developing a fully integrated service to support the work of schools, settings, LLCs and external organisations. In addition, the Partnership is pursuing the work it is commissioned by CYPS to carry out in pursuit of both statutory and strategic objectives. The benefits of this fully integrated service are:

- Greater coherence in service delivery together with efficiencies in systems and procedures that are a direct consequence of integration
- The ability to recruit and retain specialist staff due to the breadth of portfolio of services and products on offer
- The sustainability of specialist services in a challenging financial climate as a result of increased flexibility to offer services in a traded or commissioned environment, both within Devon and further afield
- Increased service flexibility and deployment opportunities across the whole service, with appropriate professional development opportunities
- Opportunities for staff to contribute "thinking" and to take an active role in seeking innovative solutions to the challenges of an ever changing environment

**David Tall:** An options appraisal is being undertaken for the future governance and business model of the Devon Learning and Development Partnership (LDP). The options appraisal exercise is part of the 'StratCom' project within DCC's Children and Young People's Services directorate and is being conducted between November and February. DAG is directly involved in the process

#### **14. HR Issues** (see documents on website)

- A detailed list of Personnel Policies that should be in place in schools is at: <http://staff.devon.gov.uk/cr/er/gap/schoolspersonnel/schoolspersonnelpolicylist.htm> NB - personnel policies cannot be accessed via a home PC, only in schools
- **New HT Induction** A copy of a very helpful paper giving guidance to governors on the induction of a newly appointed HT teacher can be found on the DAG website
- **HT Resignation** When a HT submits their resignation to the GB, there is a requirement for the GB to inform the LA formally in writing that the HT has resigned. Prompt action by the GB on this enables the School Improvement Officer to respond quickly with support for recruitment. The letter needs to be addressed to Anne Whiteley, Director of CYPs, with a copy sent to the relevant School Improvement Officer
- **Model Flexible Working Requests Policy for Schools** – response to increasing number of requests from staff (see <http://staff.devon.gov.uk/cr/er/gap/schoolspersonnel/schoolsflexibleworking.htm> - again only accessible from school). This policy for GBs to adopt has been consulted upon with the recognised professional associations and trade unions. It is essential that the policy and in particular the time scales detailed within it are followed - failure to do so could lead to claims being made through an Employment Tribunal against the school. A paper giving guidance to governors on some of the pitfalls of employment law and failing to adopt model policies to school needs can be found on the DAG website

**15. Teaching Awards** 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)

There are 3 new categories, bringing the total number of awards to 13. They are:

- Teaching Award for Outstanding School Team of the Year, which will recognise all kinds of excellent teams of staff working together in different ways and achieving exceptional results
- Film my school' - a competition that invites children and young people to make a short film about their school. It's an opportunity to tell the world what makes it such a great place to be. There's a prize of £5,000-worth of video equipment for the UK winner
- Henry Winkler Teaching Award for Special Needs. Henry Winkler (aka 'the Fonz' in Happy Days ) is a keen campaigner for special needs and won significant funding from Absolute Radio for the Teaching Awards - his favourite charity. Outstanding special needs teams can now bid for the funds to support their crucial work. There are three awards, one of £15,000 and two of £10,000.

9 other categories of Teaching Awards reward individual staff - teachers, HTs, teaching assistants and governors; the tenth is the DCSF Award for Sustainable Schools, a whole-school award now entering its third year

#### **16. Children in Care ( CiC )**

- On Jan. 22<sup>nd</sup> 2010 there will be a celebration of the achievements of children and young people in the care of DCC during 2008/09
- The role of the Designated Teacher for CiC in all maintained schools became statutory on 1st September 2009. This requires the GB to designate the member of staff. Devon schools have had a person in place with this responsibility for some time, but Governors are asked to check with the HT that the prescribed qualifications and experience required are met. The DCSF will be publishing statutory guidance in November. In the meantime contact [Deborah.booth@devon.gov.uk](mailto:Deborah.booth@devon.gov.uk) if you have any queries
- Many thanks to all Clerks who have returned the name of the designated Governor for CiC. If you have a governor fulfilling this role but have not informed Deborah Booth please send names + basic contact details

#### **17. Single Point of Entry / Admissions**

- Recommendations from the Rose Review Team have been accepted by ministers who are working towards implementation for September 2011. They will be releasing guidance from January 2010. As far as points of entry are concerned, Devon would be required to change the county policy - and VA schools their own policy where necessary - for the admission arrangements consultation which must start by January 1<sup>st</sup>. The move to a universal offer point in September of the Rising 5 year will go ahead from September 2011. A change to policy for Devon will be formulated for the next consultation round and will be incorporated in the draft template admissions policy for VA schools. In the interests of clarity and consistency and the consideration of transition arrangements for early years' settings, there will be no changes before 2011. **Andrew Brent** (Education Policy and Strategy Officer): [The DCSF has issued a single question consultation on the universal offer point for the September after the 4<sup>th</sup> birthday. This closes on November 16<sup>th</sup>. Their intention is to amend the Code of Practice on Admissions in February 2010 to require all admission authorities to make this change for September 2011. Further details at \[www.devon.gov.uk/speconsultation\]\(http://www.devon.gov.uk/speconsultation\)](#)
- There will be a proposed in-year co-ordinated scheme for admissions from September 2010

- The LA would prefer proposals for any change to designated areas in December to be discussed and agreed with neighbouring schools where possible. With the volume of material sent to schools for their attention, the annual formal consultation on admissions arrangements does not consistently receive the level of attention it requires. The consultation and the designated areas within it would benefit from a higher profile. There is a distinction between large-scale changes to designated areas resulting from Area Reviews and the smaller-scale changes looked for here. Regrettably, there are inaccuracies and inconsistencies in the online designated areas dating from the maps' digitisation in 2004. Local knowledge is vital in identifying these so they can be corrected.
- Any queries should be addressed to Andrew Brent ( [Andrew.brent@devon.gov.uk](mailto:Andrew.brent@devon.gov.uk) )

## **18. NGA Issues**

- **New Vetting & Barring Scheme** This is designed both to improve and to extend the current employment vetting practices. The first phase of the Scheme went live on 12 October 2009, with the main aspects of the Scheme including registrations having been delayed until 26 July 2010. School governors are specifically named in the legislation under the requirements for 'specified positions' and so will require registration. The Scheme is being implemented over a 5 year phasing period and in the first instance will apply to new school governors or those starting a new term of office. The cost of registration will be free for volunteers. The NGA will issue a more detailed briefing when more aspects of the Scheme become clear. Recent press comment has led to the announcement of a review of certain aspects of the Scheme, namely the 'frequent' and 'intensive' definitions. Do not however expect great changes. The main aspects of the scheme are not under review and nor is the coverage nor launch dates  
**Tara Hall** (Records Disclosure Manager): The new vetting and barring scheme is a mandatory additional safeguarding check and does not replace the need for CRB checks. It is expected that once the scheme is fully rolled out some sectors may stop rechecks of CRB but this is not anticipated in local government. The only change expected is that of the process and the fact that CRB and ISA applications will be on a joint form and at a joint fee of £64 for anyone who is not a volunteer
- **Governance Review** There is still no news but as soon as it is published NGA will alert members to the report and consultation dates. **Please respond to the consultation, late as it may be!**
- Phil Revell, the CEO, is standing down at the end of January
- The Regional Director John Pay, has been re-elected to 2012
- Coverage a few weeks ago in the TES underlined the need for governors to have access to high quality advice on personnel issues. A Surrey HT has been awarded £70,000, the maximum award, after being unfairly dismissed by her GB. The employment tribunal criticised the school's governors for their 'flawed' disciplinary procedures, which were described as 'substantially' unfair. The school is a voluntary aided Church of England primary. This case underlines the need for GBs to seek professional or legal advice before initiating disciplinary action against school leaders. Such advice can be obtained via the NGA legal service although the first port of call should be the school's link Human Resources Officer. Schools' HR helpline is 01392 384567
- Government consultations may be bureaucratic and tedious, but if no-one responds the politicians will inevitably take the view that no one objects. So a current 'consultation' should be at the very top of governors' to do lists over the next few weeks. It can be found at [https://qca.custhelp.com/cgi-bin/qca.cfg/php/enduser/doc\\_serve.php?2=TES090021NCABenefits](https://qca.custhelp.com/cgi-bin/qca.cfg/php/enduser/doc_serve.php?2=TES090021NCABenefits). The consultation is from the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Authority (QCDA) the successor body to the QCA and looks at the proposal to move Key Stage 2 assessments from May to June in the year 2011. This proposal, recommended by the 'Expert Group' earlier this year, was made on the basis that later testing would allow schools to spend more time in the summer term on English and mathematics. However, later testing has some implications that the expert group and the government appear not to have considered. This is the time when many primary schools organise activities such as environmental work, outdoor adventure, arts and crafts. Moving the SATs into the summer term would inevitably impact on this work, which many HTs and governors already feel has been marginalised in Year 6 by the baleful presence of the SAT tests. Later testing would also mean later marking and later feedback of results. It would almost certainly mean that primary schools would not be able to inform children and parents of the results of the tests before those children left school. Admittedly this is the current situation with GCSEs and A levels, but secondary schools are used to the mid August results liaison with teenagers. The relocation in the calendar of the SATs will also mean that all three testing programmes – GCSE, A level and SATs will be running simultaneously. It is difficult to predict what results this might have, but the potential for unanticipated problems exists. The NGA would like as many governors as possible to respond to this consultation which is about whether the week they have chosen is feasible. The only way to disagree is by clicking 'no' when you get to the box which recommends the week in question and then in the following box giving a reason. If enough people respond with good reasons QCDA may change their minds!

## **19. Snippets**

- **Governor Vacancies** If your GB is having difficulty filling Community or LA governor vacancies contact [Brenda.Dutton@devon.gov.uk](mailto:Brenda.Dutton@devon.gov.uk) at DGS. The team holds a list of people interested in becoming governors in Devon and may be able to help!
- **New Administration at County Hall**
  - Cllr John Hart, Leader of Devon's Conservative group and local Member for Bickleigh and Wembury is Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Council's Executive Committee
  - Cllr Christine Channon, local Member for Budleigh, takes responsibility for Schools and Skills
  - Cllr Andrea Davis, Combe Martin Rural, takes responsibility for Children's Health and Wellbeing
  - Cllr Vanessa Newcombe, Exeter Alphington and Cowick, is Chairman of CYPS Scrutiny Committee
- **Who's Who at County Hall** There is a document detailing the names and roles of County Hall officers within the Children & Young People's Services structure on the DAG website

## **20. ... and finally, the Value of DAG Area Meetings**

Is it worth attending these meetings and reading the follow-up? We can only quote 2 examples from meetings this term together with a comment from leading educationalist, Fiona Millar.

1. The CoG had attended a previous Area Meeting and when she received notification of this term's meeting re-arranged the date of the planned Full GB meeting in order to attend ... and also brought along other governors – all of whom spoke highly at the end of the value of the meeting

2. A note from a new attendee, a CoG whose GB had never previously attended an Area Meeting: *"Thoroughly enjoyed the meeting and its format. I shall encourage greater involvement from others at our school. I find it hard to believe that little or no interest has been shown in your group and am left concerned that the majority of our governors are less than informed on their responsibilities and roles. I have already addressed this with our HM and shall be following that up at the next full meeting to attempt to bring about a culture of critical friend rather than the current supportive but distant uncle attitude. An Ofsted would catch us cold at the moment."*

Fiona Millar spoke at our conference several years ago and readily welcomes our termly feedback document. On this occasion she wrote: *"It is a very impressive document and reflects the complexity of such a large authority with so many schools in different circumstances and a great distance apart."*

Perhaps readers who have reached this point might like to share this with any governor colleagues they may know who do not work with others!!

## **D Useful documents for GBs**

1. **Effective Governing Body File and CD** produced by Devon Governor Services – templates for standing orders, agendas etc
2. **Finding & Keeping Effective School Governors** produced by Devon Governor Services ( 2007 )
3. **Exploring Federation - A Toolkit for Schools** from DCC
4. **Learning Data Sets** – sent to all LLCs by DCC
5. **Matters Arising magazine** – 6 times a year from NGA to members
6. **Devon Governor** – termly magazine
7. **Governors** – termly magazine from DCSF

## **E Future Meetings**

Future meetings are planned as follows:

Spring Term 2010 will be held for the following clusters of LLCs – dates in January and venues to be confirmed by early December

- Axe Valley, Exmouth, Honiton, Ottery-St-Mary and Sidmouth
- Dawlish, Newton Abbot, Teign Valley and Teignmouth
- Culm Valley and Tiverton
- Holsworthy, Okehampton and Tavistock

For 2010/11 Academic Year meetings will take place in the Autumn Term for the LLCs listed above. The Spring Term meetings will be held for the LLCs that attended the current round of meetings. We know that this means that some areas have 2 meetings in a calendar year and others no meetings – however, arrangements for academic years are the most important guideline!