

DAG MONTHLY NEWSLETTER – APRIL 2007

Welcome back to the new school term and this, the first of the re-launched DAG monthly newsletters, which reflects information garnered until 20 April 2007.

I have tried to make the letter as interesting and informative as possible, but if you have any views on the content do please let me know. I want to produce something, which you want, and not something I think you want!!

The first newsletter is divided into a “snippets” section; a local “report” and update on LA issues section followed by information from the DfES, NUT, ATL, NASUWT, NAHT and NGA websites. I had intended extracting articles of interest from the National Confederation of PTAs, but this is a subscription based website and I am not able to access it. For information however their website address is www.ncpta.org.uk.

In reproducing any article or note I make no comment and neither is the inclusion of any article to be interpreted as being of any particular position held by any member of the DAG Executive. I have just tried to give a wide, balanced view of education across the country.

I start with “snippets”.

The DfES is undertaking a project examining the pay and conditions of work of school support staff. Schools may be contacted during the spring or summer terms to help by answering a questionnaire.

From 1 January 2007 changes were introduced to the Teachers’ Pension Scheme which mean more flexibility and greater choice over how individuals save and plan for retirement; including flexible retirement, increased options for saving outside the main scheme and encouragement to consider pension planning from an earlier stage in their career. Outdated features of the scheme have been reformed allowing arrangements to meet the needs of both employees and employers to make the most of teachers’ experience and expertise. In their role as employers Governors need to be aware of the new flexibilities as they can help with the management of the workforce and succession planning. Full details of all the changes are available on the Teachers’ Pensions website: www.teacherspensions.co.uk.

Some schools are already experiencing problems in attracting candidates for headship and over the next three years the problem will get worse as significant numbers of heads retire. Appointing a headteacher is one of the most important jobs a Governing Body has to undertake, and thus Governing Bodies need to consider the whole question of school leadership (including headship) before it becomes an issue, not once it’s become unavoidable. You may also need to consider options other than the traditional head such as co-heads or federations with executive heads and heads of learning.

In conjunction with the National College for School Leadership (NCSL), NGA is running a series of regional conferences on succession planning. The conferences include a keynote speech and practical workshops. The most convenient venue for the SW is at Bristol on Saturday 23 June at the Macdonald Hotel, Holland House, Redcliffe Hill, Bristol, BS1 6SQ. The conferences are for governors and governance professionals and are completely free of charge. If you would like to book a place you can download a booking form from www.nga.org.uk or email NGA on governorhq@nga.org.uk or phone on 0121-643-5787.

I commend two other websites to you. www.veteransagency.mod.uk/veteransday presents an opportunity for schools to win up to £2000. If you visit www.learningbraineurope.org you will learn of two conferences to be held in Oxford, 4-5 June and Harrogate, 7-8 June

I remind Governors of the Alternative Services Portfolio process which seeks Governors to sit on interview boards from 9 July. The interviews will take all week, but any time a Governor can give will be valuable. Governors have an opportunity to be involved in an important process.

Similarly we continue to seek Governor representation on JE Appeal bodies. If you are able to support either of the processes please contact me on dmrmtall@mvdartmoor.freeserve.co.uk

Secondary schools should have received a copy and support pack of Al Gore's Oscar-winning documentary film, An Inconvenient Truth, as promised by SoS in February. More details in www.defra.gov.uk/news/latest/2007/climate-0202a.htm.

I now turn to news from Devon.

DEVON

A report from this year's DAG Assembly will appear in the next edition of Devon Governor, but I give an early heads-up that next year's Assembly will be held on Saturday 29 March 2008.

I also take this opportunity to remind GBs of the excellent information contained in the weekly Gold Sheets, produced by DGS and which can be found at www.devon.gov.uk/index/learning/schools/governors/dgs-clerks/dgs-goldsheet.htm

Meanwhile:

Devon CYPS want to celebrate the achievements of young people aged 13 – 19 and recognise their hard work and dedication in making themselves and their communities better. This celebration is very much in line with the Every Child Matters initiative. They want to know about young people who have worked hard to develop themselves and challenge expectations, and young people who have worked selflessly to develop their communities and inspire others. On 7 July 2007 CYPS will celebrate the achievements of young people aged 13 – 19 in an awards ceremony at County Hall.

If you know a young person whose contribution should be recognised, then tell CYPS why they deserve a **Young People's Achievement Award** by post to.

CYPS Publications
Room 142
County Hall
Topsham Road
Exeter
EX2 4QR

or via the website www.devon.gov.uk/questionnaire/ypaawards/ypaawards.htm

I represented Devon Governors at County Hall on 3rd April for the launch of "Doing it for Devon". Although the campaign to urge Devon residents to make a 'climate change for the better' as part of the Council's drive to make Devon 'England's greenest county', is specifically aimed at homes and families, there is clear cross over with schools and indeed parts of the curriculum. 'Do it for Devon' is the headline theme for the county wide campaign, aimed at reducing domestic emissions which account for a third of Devon's total carbon emissions. A householder's guide has been produced with practical hints and tips on reducing energy consumption and carbon emissions. It shows how much money individual households can save as a result of a few simple lifestyle changes, and the cumulative impact that can have on the county's overall CO₂ emissions. The campaign will also feature TV and cinema advertising, carbon footprint pledge packs for schools and families, with competitions to win

prizes donated by Bikeshed, and Devon Association of Tourist Attractions. A community roadshow will visit venues across Devon with resident experts on subjects ranging from composting to cycling. Tour dates are published on the County Council's website. 5,000 low energy light bulbs, donated by EDF as part of its energy efficiency programme, are also being given away, which will entirely offset both the cost and the carbon emissions of the campaign.

It was a pleasure to see some pupils from Alphington Primary School take a starring role in the launch

On 3rd of April I represented DAG at the launch of the

New Property Services Management Scheme which saw NPS SW Ltd enter into a new 15-year partnership with Devon County Council to provide property services for public and private sectors within the South West on 1 April 2007. The partnership will see 135 of Devon's property services staff transfer to NPS South West Ltd, with the intention of expanding the business by winning work from new clients. The new joint venture company will be in shared ownership between NPS and Devon County Council, with the deal protecting the jobs of existing staff working in Property Services. NPS South West Ltd will employ the transferred staff and its services will include estates and asset management, building and quantity surveying, architectural design, facilities management, mechanical and electrical engineering and energy management and project management.

DfES

There are a number of articles of interest on the DfES website, www.dfes.gov.uk and include:

New powers to discipline pupils

Schools now have [new statutory powers](#) to discipline badly-behaved pupils. These measures form part of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and represent the first major change to teachers' guidelines on discipline for a decade. Prior to the Act, teachers were allowed to restrain pupils under common law, with the same authority as parents. But teachers have complained that the previous guidelines on discipline were not clear enough and they did not always know if they had the law on their side.

The new measures include:

- the legal right to confiscate inappropriate items from pupils such as mobile phones or music players;
- statutory powers to discipline pupils who behave badly on the way to and from school, for instance when travelling on buses and trains;
- greater legal scope and flexibility in giving pupils detentions, which may include after-school and Saturday detentions;
- a legal duty on schools to make provision to tackle all forms of bullying.

Using 'reasonable force'

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 strengthens the legal power for teachers and other school staff to use 'reasonable force' to prevent pupils from committing a crime or causing injury, damage, or disruption. This power was first enshrined in the Education Act 1996. There is no legal definition of reasonable force. In exceptional circumstances where there is an immediate risk of injury, a member of the school staff may take the necessary action to prevent a pupil from, for example, hitting someone or throwing an object. Corporal punishment was abolished in 1986.

Weapons searches

Legislation in the [Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006](#) allows head teachers to search groups of pupils if they suspect one of them is carrying a knife. Heads are also entitled to use metal-detector arches and wands to carry out random, non-intrusive searches of pupils for weapons. These powers will come into effect in May 2007.

In another article the **Chancellor announces funding plans in Budget**

Mr Brown used his speech to outline how money will be spent in supporting schools, colleges, universities and children's services. The Government's commitments to childcare, personalised learning in schools and widening participation in Higher Education will all be built on. Extra help will also be given to improve Britain's skill base. The key announcements, part of the Comprehensive Spending Review settlement, are:

- Total spending on education in England (including capital) is to increase by an average of 2.5% above inflation each year from April 2008 to March 2011.
- This means that an extra £10.7bn will be invested in education, children's services and skills by 2011.

Meanwhile I remind you that 5 current DfES Consultations expire during May.

NUT

I had hoped to include an Executive Summary of the NUT's Annual Conference 7 – 10 April, but none was available on their website, www.teachers.org.uk, however it does include a couple of interesting reports outlined below.

The first concerns injuries sustained by teachers in the classroom and the article states:

"The extent of injuries being suffered by teachers in parts of the UK has been revealed by a National Union of Teachers (NUT) official, highlighting the risks teachers can face in the classroom. Sue McMahon, NUT official from Calderdale, listed a number of injuries and violent attackers that some of her members have been subject to. According to the BBC these include instances of biting, thumping, kicking, spitting and head-butting, by children as young as five and six. These reports are prompting fresh concern over the safety of teaching staff in primary and secondary school classrooms, and the ability they have to protect themselves from violent behaviour. To help address the problem the NUT is hoping to secure the right to refuse to teach violent children, having voted in favour of moves to take industrial action to this end. Earlier this month new rules came into effect giving teachers the power to physically restrain violent and unruly pupils, under the 2006 Education and Inspections Act."

The other article concerns the national cost of under achievement at school and states:

"The failure to educate and prepare young people for the world of work is costing the economy billions of pounds in lost earnings, according to a new report out today. The study, undertaken by the Prince's Trust and the Royal Bank of Scotland, has warned youth unemployment is costing up to £10 million every day in lost productivity. Based on research by the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics, the study suggests underachievement in education and the knock-on impact of youth crime and benefit payments are hitting taxpayers hard. Martina Milburn, chief executive of the Prince's Trust, explained: "Almost one in five young people are out of work, education or training. "Only by helping young people develop new skills and get back into work can we make a real investment in our country's future."

The report suggests social exclusion is not simply creating a generation of people who feel they do not belong to the community, but that it is exacerbating problems with a lack of core skills and quality among jobseekers. Every year around 70,000 school-age offenders enter

the youth justice system, two-thirds of who are said to be unemployed at the time of their arrest. The twin impact of lost earnings from potential employees and the costs incurred by the criminalisation of British youth is said by the report to total more than £1 billion every year. The failure to educate and prepare young people for the world of work is costing the economy billions of pounds in lost earnings, according to a new report out today. The study, undertaken by the Prince's Trust and the Royal Bank of Scotland, has warned youth unemployment is costing up to £10 million every day in lost productivity. Based on research by the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics, the study suggests underachievement in education and the knock-on impact of youth crime and benefit payments are hitting taxpayers hard. Martina Milburn, chief executive of the Prince's Trust, explained: "Almost one in five young people are out of work, education or training. "Only by helping young people develop new skills and get back into work can we make a real investment in our country's future."

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ATL

Like the other Teaching Unions, the ATL, www.atl.org.uk , held its Annual Conference over Easter and Governors may be interested in the Sec of State's speech which is contained on the ATL's website.

NASUWT

The NASUWT have produced a number of reports which are included on their website www.nasuwt.org and include those on Tackling Internet Harassment; the 2020 Vision for Teaching and Learning and on The Schools Admission Code

NAHT

The NAHT is holding its Annual Conference 4-7 May and I hope to include some feedback in May's newsletter. Meanwhile you can keep up to date with what concerns and interests this Association through its website www.naht.org.uk

I look forward to receiving feedback on this newsletter and of course receiving any concerns, which you may have as a Governor.

NGA The NGA has produced its Summer Newsletter and copies have been despatched to your schools. I reproduce two articles from that letter below

Retaining and Developing Staff – A Governors' Guide to Sabbaticals for Teachers

Headteachers and governing bodies may be understandably wary of releasing teachers on sabbaticals – 'they won't come back' is the common perception. However, research by VSO and the Institute of Education (Time IN: The impact of a VSO placement on professional development, commitment and retention of UK teachers -2002) indicated quite the opposite. The research found that volunteering with VSO dramatically improves teacher commitment, motivation and retention.

Of course there are important issues to consider, such how a teacher's sabbatical will be covered, but the benefits of releasing staff are considerable. They come back refreshed with a variety of new skills and increased personal and professional confidence.

NGA has teamed up with VSO to produce 'Retaining and Developing Staff – A Governors' Guide to Sabbaticals for Teachers'. One copy has been sent to every governing body in England. Further copies can be downloaded from www.nga.org.uk.

For further information on VSO visit their website at www.vso.org.uk

Gender Equality Duty (GED)

On 1 April 2007 an important new duty, the Gender Equality Duty came into force. The GED requires public authorities to promote gender equality and eliminate sex discrimination. Instead of depending on individuals making complaints about sex discrimination, the duty places the legal responsibility on public authorities to demonstrate that they treat men and women fairly.

Under the GED Code of Practice, schools fall into the category of 'public authority'. More specifically it is the governing body who is responsible for ensuring that the GED is implemented. As well as the general duty to eliminate unlawful sexual discrimination and harassment and promote equality of opportunity between men and women, there are several specific duties which require each school to:

- Prepare and publish a gender equality scheme, showing how it intends to fulfil its general and specific duties and setting out its gender equality objectives
- Consider the need to include objectives to address the causes of any gender pay gap in formulating its overall objectives
- Gather and use information on how the school's policies and practices affect gender equality in the workforce and in the delivery of services
- Consult stakeholders and take account of relevant information in order to determine its gender equality objectives
- Assess the impact of its current and proposed policies and practices on gender equality
- Implement the actions set out in its scheme within three years
- Report against the scheme every year and review the scheme at least every three years

To help schools implement the GED, the Equal Opportunities Commission has published guidance. 'The gender equality duty and schools - guidance for England' can be downloaded via the link below. Chapter 7 specifically relates to the role of governing bodies.

<http://www.eoc.org.uk/default.aspx?page=20177>

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EO to DAG