

DEVON ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNORS MONTHLY NEWSLETTER – MARCH 2009

The order of this newsletter is as follows:

Devon Association of Governors (DAG)
Local Authority (LA)
National Governors' Association (NGA)
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Primary Snippets
Secondary Snippets
A lesson in economics

DAG

AREA MEETINGS for this term are now complete. A detailed report will be issued shortly and placed on the DAG website. There are so many different topics discussed that the report will be necessarily long. Noting that not everything will be relevant to everybody the website report will be broken down into bite size notes.

AGM

This year's AGM will be held at 1800 on Thursday 12 March 2009 in the Garden Room of the West of England School for the partially sighted. Please let David Tall know if you intend attending so that he can make the necessary domestic arrangements. Meanwhile please refer to the DAG Website, where you have the opportunity to cast any votes / ask any questions about DAG Finances / Executive Committee Membership. www.dag.gb.com

CONFERENCE

The plans for the 2009 Conference are almost complete. It will be held on 4 July at County Hall. We have secured the services of Sue Palmer, renowned for her book "Toxic Childhood". She is noted as a brilliant public speaker and we consider her attendance as something of a coup. In addition we are delighted that Chris Keates the Secretary of the NASUWT will also speak. Our third speaker is David Triggs the CEO of The Academies Enterprise Trust in Essex. Mr Triggs is also the Principal of Greensward Academy.

Online application is now available on the DAG website. We anticipate a "sell out" so to ensure your attendance you are advised to book early.

The theme for the Conference will be "Self improvement = School Improvement"

Although it is planned to be an all day event the programme will be designed so that Governors can dip in and out and attend at their convenience

One of the highlights of last year's Conference was the contribution from a number of our youngsters. This year we are really delighted to have secured the services of Whitchurch Primary School who will launch the day with their award-winning anthem D.E.V.O.N., and Mary Tavy PS's Gospel Choir, who will entertain us at lunchtime.

This year we are holding a Poetry Competition and invite EVERY school to participate. There will be prizes for the winning schools from the 3 sectors and the LA have kindly offered to publish a digest of the poems the children produce. DAG has written to the Primary, Special and Secondary Heads' Associations inviting them to support this competition but Governors have a part to play too. The first words of the poem must be "Devon inspires me to....."

The Conference is once again being supported by NPS (SW). DAG is most grateful for that support and to Cornwall and Devon Connexions and Pecorama, Beer who have offered generous prizes to support the day and particularly our help to recognise our youngsters' contributions.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU)

DAG is delighted to announce that it will sign an MOU with the LA entitled Working Together for Better Schools, on 13 March 2009. The MOU, which will be despatched to all Schools shortly, formalises the relationship between the County Council and DAG. It is designed to promote sustained improvement in all Devon's 364 primary, secondary and special schools through closer working arrangements. Comments on this document will be most welcome.

OFSTED INSPECTION PROJECT – SUMMER TERM 2009 PILOT

Devon will be participating in a pilot in the summer term. This follows Ofsted's consultations in 2008 on new arrangements for school inspections and pilot inspections which have taken place in a small number of LAs during the last year. There is quite a lot of information on this issue which I have placed on the DAG Website

SEF UPDATE

A number of changes have been made to the SEF and Governors are encouraged to address the changes to Questions 1c; 2a; 2b; 3a; 3b; 4b; 4d; 4e; 4f; 4g; 4a; 5b; 5c; 5d; 6a; 6b and 6c. The SEF continues to play a major role in Ofsted's deliberations

DAG has access to an excellent article in the recent Croners' update and is seeking permission to reproduce these for Governors to assist better understanding of the changes above.

Meanwhile if GBs would like any further information they should contact David Tall.

REPRESENTATIVES / LA COMMITTEES-

Although we are currently fully complemented on various bodies DAG is aware of the following upcoming vacancies Schools' Commissioning Forum; Schools' Organisational Forum; Learning and Achievement Board and Schools' Funding Group. If you wish to learn more please contact David Tall.

Additionally you will note from the website that several people double up on various Committees and it would be great to spread the burden / skills base, so if you have a particular interest, do please let me know and I will negotiate succession or even increased representation.

GENERAL

The Chair met Judith Johnson on 24 February.

The next DAG Executive Committee Meeting is being held on 12 March 2009, following the AGM

The Chair and EO are attending the NGA SW Regional Meeting on 14 March

The Chair and EO are meeting Torbay and Plymouth Governors Reps on 18 March

LA

The Governing Body of Sparkwell All Saints C of E Primary School wishes to consult on the future of the school. The consultation booklet can be accessed on line at: <http://www.consultationfinder.com/devon> by typing 'Sparkwell' into the 'Keyword' box and selecting 'all' in the status box. The website will be updated with further information as matters progress. The closing date for responding to the consultation is 5:00pm on Friday 20 March 2009. Please send responses to Mrs Margaret Kingwell, Chair of Governors, Sparkwell All Saints C of E Primary School, Sparkwell, Plymouth, Devon PL7 5DB or by e-mail to admin@sparkwell-primary.devon.sch.uk

National recognition for Devon's healthy school meals

DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL'S healthy school meals have been recognised nationally for their quality. The authority's Devon Catering and Cleaning Services, (DCCS), has been awarded the Soil Association's Food for Life Catering Mark. Devon is only the third school meals' provider in the country to win a Food for Life Award across the whole service at this level.

It will be presented to county councillor Brenda Taylor and the head of DCCS, Sarah Skinner, by Prince Charles on Friday (Feb 20). To win the award, Devon had to prove:

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

DAG congratulates DCCS on this prestigious award.

DAG also congratulates the LA on its recent 4* award. This is a considerable achievement

Governors will recall the LA was expecting a final announcement from the Local Government Boundary Committee in February about its recommendations for Devon. The Boundary Committee's provisional recommendation last year was for a single, unitary Devon. The LA has been informed that the Secretary of State for Local Government and Communities has now extended the deadline by which the Boundary Committee must provide its advice on local government reorganisation in Devon, Norfolk and Suffolk from this Friday, February 13 to July 15, 2009. The Boundary Committee has met to consider its position in the light of this decision. In the current economic climate, this continued uncertainty is unhelpful and we need to find an early resolution. This delay almost certainly means that the implementation of any eventual unitary recommendations will be delayed from April 2010 to April 2011.

A new Vetting and Barring Scheme, which is designed to both improve and to extend the current employment vetting practices, is scheduled to go-live on 12 October 2009. The Scheme will be established under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and preparations are now under way for full implementation. The Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) is a non-departmental public body and is the decision-making element of the Scheme. The Scheme will cover all those who work or volunteer, or seek to work or volunteer with children and/or vulnerable adults and will be administered by the Criminal Records Bureau. Individuals will be required to apply to the ISA (via the DCC Records Disclosure Service) to gain registration on the scheme in order to start or continue working with children and/or vulnerable adults. For the first 6 months of the Scheme all new entrants to the workforce or those who move post will be required to register. Following this there will be a staged roll out period from 2010 – 2014 for all existing staff.

The new Scheme will reform current vetting and barring practices, creating a single list of those barred from working with children and a single list of those barred from working with vulnerable adults. As a consequence, the current barring regimes (such as the Protection of Children Act List (POCA), the Protection of Vulnerable Adults List (POVA), List 99 and Disqualification Orders) will cease to exist. The Scheme does not however replace the need for a CRB check, as it will not highlight a person's criminal background in full to an employer. It will only consider information which is deemed serious enough to place someone on a barred list.

Important changes to Decision Making

To help ensure a smooth transition to the new Scheme going live, the Government has confirmed that the ISA will start making barring decisions on new referrals under the current schemes. Therefore from the **20 January 2009** the ISA officially took over responsibility from the Secretary of State for the making of barring decisions on new referrals under the POCA, POVA and List 99 schemes.

As a result of this transition, the only operational changes are as follows:

- New referrals must be made to the ISA and not the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). The new referral address is: Independent Safeguarding Authority, PO Box 181, Darlington DL1 9FA.
- The wording printed on CRB certificates relating to POCA, POVA and List 99 will change slightly to reflect the fact the decision is now taken by the ISA.
- New referrals will no longer be considered for provisional listing on POCA or POVA.
- Employers within the education sector should cease to make misconduct referrals to DCSF. Misconduct referrals on teachers (i.e. with no child protection element) from 20 January 2009 must go to the GTC.

The DCSF published the latest attendance figures last week. I'm delighted to report in our secondary schools the persistent absence percentage reduced by a sizeable 1.3 per cent to 5 per cent, achieving our DCSF target three years ahead of schedule. There was also a significant reduction in the PA percentage in primary schools - from 1.7 per cent to 1.1 per cent. This was the LA's first year of deploying additional resources to work strategically with schools and wishes to thank everybody for their efforts.

School Term Dates Consultation

The dates being proposed for 2010/11 are broadly in line with the dates Devon's neighbouring authorities are considering, as well as the dates proposed by the Local Government Association. The proposed calendar was also discussed at the Teachers' Consultative Committee meeting in December 2008.

The LA would like to receive views from Headteachers and Governors on the term dates calendar being proposed. The deadline for responses is **5:00pm on Friday 3 April 2009**.

To express your views see the Devon County County [School Term Dates Consultation](#) webpage or write to:

Shona Meek, School Organisation Officer, Room 120, CYPS, Devon County Council, County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, EX2 4QG

As part of the national pilot the LA are participating in the Improvement and Development Agency (I&DeA) peer review challenge which has been devised to benchmark safeguarding. This approach has been developed in conjunction with the NSPCC and the Tavistock Institute. The I&DeA Team are working with Devon throughout March and early April. This will provide safeguarding partnerships and the Children's Trust with valuable information to inform our improvement and development of services. This is timely as the responsibilities and accountabilities on all who have never more been in the public eye. The Team will be seeking feedback from across the whole system using a partner self-evaluation questionnaire, analysing key documentation and conducting interviews and visits. Governors have an important part to play in this review and I would be grateful to hear from 2 Chairs who would be willing to attend a group interview on Tuesday 31st March 11 - 12 noon at County Hall, with the Director of Children's Services for Kingston. Similarly there will be an opportunity to attend the **feedback and prioritisation workshop on April 3rd** 9.30 - 3.30pm at Great Moor House. The LA will meet expenses. Please let me know at your earliest convenience. Thank you.

NGA

The following has been received from the NGA

The Review of Governance should have been completed by now, but the process is not complete and the date for the review group final meeting has yet to be arranged. This means that the soonest possible publication date for a review report is early April. Alongside the other members of the review group the NGA promised to maintain confidentiality about the deliberations of the group, but a few observations can be made without breaking that undertaking.

It's clear that the DCSF have 'rowed back' from their view that the effectiveness of a GB was determined by its size. Some adjustment to the maximum GB size may follow from the group's report, but the clear consensus within the group was that size was the wrong starting point. Our consistent view has been that the important issue was the job we expected GBs to do. Once that strategic task was properly defined then other things would follow.

NGA remains hopeful that Ministers have accepted the view about the need for mandatory training for new governors, and about the need for a clearer focus on the status of and training for Clerks.

There is concern that ministers have lost enthusiasm for this project and that little actual change may result from the process.

Call for NGA Representatives

The NGA represents governors in literally dozens of meetings. Some of these are direct with the DCSF, including our regular meeting with the Minister; others are with agencies and groups, such as the TDA and NCSL.

NGA is very aware that they may be members who have specific knowledge or skills who have no particular desire to be Board members, but who would welcome the opportunity to represent governors in these meetings and with NGA policy formation. If you would like to be considered for NGA representative work, please let us know. You would need to feel comfortable representing the NGA policy position, and be available to attend meetings two or three times a year. Most of these meetings are in London. The NGA would pay expenses in respect of people's attendance at these meetings.

If you are interested please contact phil.revell@nga.org.uk

The next NGA AGM will be held on 7 November 2009 in Birmingham. DAG will be represented

The NGA has produced a number of its weekly newsletters. They have been e-mailed to all members for whom the NGA hold e-mail addresses, whilst the monthly Board Bulletin (BB) is sent to Local Associations. I always forward the BB to IGs, and place it on our website, but if you would also like the weekly newsletter please let me know.

DCSF

There are 9 live consultations on the DCSF Website and whilst Consultations can be time consuming they are an important part of our democratic process. DAG is conscious that it may have a role to assist GBs in responding to

consultations. DAG will NOT however participate in Consultations per se because it recognises that there will be a variety of different considerations / ideas, and the Executive feels that it cannot fairly represent every view / counter view nonetheless it might be able to take some of the pressure off GBs and assist the process. We will look at developing this assistance in the coming year. Meanwhile GBs are encouraged to participate in all Consultations. Please note 2 of the consultations complete during March

PRIMARY SNIPPETS

Remember it is now just 20 months (September 2010) before all primary schools are due to have foreign language teaching in place across KS2, with progression from Y3 – Y6.

SECONDARY SNIPPETS

Secondary Governors may wish to be aware of the new exhibition, Body Worlds and the Mirror of Time which is running at the O2 Arena until August 2009. Suitable for KS3 onwards. See www.bodyworlds.com/en/prelude/education_uk (Note underscore between education and uk)

Last term it was announced that KS3 SATs are no longer compulsory. This statement raised a few questions and answers have been extracted from the Secondary Teachers' Magazine and are outlined for Governors information:

- SATs papers can still be used if you wish, but you will have to pay for them from now on
- Schools will collect and submit teacher assessments in all 3 core subjects to the National Assessment Agency
- There is no change to the requirement that schools report to parents teacher assessment in ALL subjects

A Lesson in Economics

Young Paddy moved to Kent and bought a Donkey from a farmer for £100.00. The farmer agreed to deliver the Donkey the next day.

The next day he drove up and said, 'Sorry Paddy, but I have some bad news, the donkey died.'

Paddy replied, 'Well, then just give me my money back.'

The farmer said, 'Can't do that. I went and spent it already.'

Paddy said, 'Ok, then, just bring me the dead donkey.'

The farmer asked, 'What are you going do with him?'

Paddy said, 'I'm going to raffle him off.'

The farmer said, 'You can't raffle off a dead donkey!'

Paddy said, 'Sure I can. Watch me.... I just won't tell anybody he's dead.'

A month later, the farmer met up with Paddy and asked, 'What happened with that dead donkey?'

Paddy said, 'I raffled him off. I sold 500 tickets at two quid a piece and made a profit of £898.00.'

The farmer said, 'Didn't anyone complain?'

Paddy said, 'Just the guy who won. So I gave him his two quid back.'

Paddy now works for the British Government.

David Tall Executive Officer to DAG 6 March 2009