

The third update for the Autumn Term - with less that is totally new! Please pass on any information to the relevant governors.

Please remember that all the updates are also placed on the DAG website in the DAG Updates section. If you would prefer just to receive the list of titles below rather than the full text please let me know.

- a) Urgent Matters - (i) Education White Paper ( All ) (ii) Updated Checklist of key actions ( All )
  - b) Volunteers Sought - (i) DAG Assistant Secretary ( All ) (ii) Schools' Forum - Primary School Representative ( Finance ) (iii) DAG Representative for Changing our Futures Group - outdoor activities and environmental awareness ( All )
  - c) Consultations ( All ) - Children's Centres in Devon : Extended Schools Development in Devon : Turning the Tables: Transforming School Food - Recommendations for the Development and Implementation of Revised School Lunch Standards
  - d) Meetings in the future - DAG Annual Assembly
  - e) Arrived in schools (i) paper (ii) by e-mail
- NB Governors are reminded that they can access information about the weekly distribution of e-mails / paperwork to schools by going in to <http://www4.devon.gov.uk/eal/distribution/index.html>
- f) New Items on Websites (i) DAG ( [www.devon.gov.uk/dag](http://www.devon.gov.uk/dag) ) ( ii ) others
  - g) Papers available from me
  - h) Brief items ( All unless indicated ) - Area Meetings Feedback : Judy Burgess Gift : LSC Funding (Secondary) : NASG/NGC Merger

..... and finally

- a) Urgent Matters - Education White Paper ( All )
  - (i) Don't necessarily believe what you read in the papers / heard on the media about this. To judge from comments from LEA officers, NGC and independent education sources [ see below ] it seems that the ' spin ' [ from whatever source ] is different from the reality of the detail. It is also an agenda much more relevant to large urban areas than the rural shires. I can provide you / direct you towards 2 sources [ in addition to the full White paper! ] that summarise the key points:

- NGC's briefing paper
- The Education Network ( TEN ) commentary

- NGC's briefing paper can be found on the NGC website at [www.ngc.org.uk](http://www.ngc.org.uk) in the Consultations and Policy Section under Briefing Reports. Access to the Briefing Reports area of the site is password protected and is for member governors only - HOWEVER ALL DEVON GOVERNORS WHOSE SCHOOLS BUY IN TO DEVON GOVERNOR SERVICES [ AND HENCE DAG ] ARE DE FACTO MEMBERS OF NGC AND CAN OBTAIN A PASSWORD. If you wish to gain access to the members only sections of the NGC website [ for this and other matters ] and need a password please contact NGC at [ngc@ngc.org.uk](mailto:ngc@ngc.org.uk) If you would prefer the briefing via email as an attachment (4 page word document) please let me know.

The White Paper is quite an extensive document (stretching to some 120 pages) and the NGC initial briefing contains bullet points of the main issues with a more extensive commentary on the statutory implications for governors, self-governing trust schools and foundation schools. A more comprehensive briefing paper covering all aspects of the White Paper will be available from NGC soon.

One of NGC's officers has commented to me " Some of the more potentially controversial aspects such as self-governing trust schools may not actually have much impact as they depend on schools opting to take that route. I guess it depends whether in time more pressure is put on schools to take this route. Likewise, to an extent, the role of parents – effective governing bodies/schools will already have mechanisms in place to consult their parents so making it a statutory duty will have little impact. " NGC would welcome members' views on the White Paper.

- TEN Briefing paper - I can also e-mail this attachment if you wish but give you part of this edited conclusion as a taster.

" This is emphatically a political White Paper .... in part more about the headlines it generated than the substance of the change it will bring about; indeed, in much of the country many of its proposals relating to choice will be quite irrelevant. It was trailed to an unusual extent over the fortnight leading up to its publication .... Inevitably, therefore, the document contained few major surprises. However, since the consistently negative media line on local authorities was obviously fuelled by briefing from the usual anonymous 'sources', the very different story in the White Paper itself was pleasantly unexpected.

The document seeks to project quite a concoction - of achievements so far; a vision of a more market oriented system in which schools (headteachers and governing bodies) have greater autonomy and responsibility; parents have greater power; pupils have greater access to the personalised learning they need; disadvantaged and vulnerable groups will be better supported and provided for; all taking place within a broader system of coherent public services for children, young people and their families (many of them located in and around schools) in which local authorities are the central players - leading on the commissioning of services, and holding to account a broadening range of providers.

But there are very real tensions in this vision, and it ignores the extent to which some of the central opportunities

described are already available, but have attracted little interest. The prominence given to schools acquiring a Trust and parents being able to start their own schools – both of which are possible now - suggests a somewhat inaccurate view of the present system and thus an unrealistic vision of how it is likely to change; indeed, given that the subsequent legislation will be largely permissive rather than prescriptive, it is quite possible that not a lot will change at all. There is little to justify the hyperbolic language associated with the proposals.

It has been suggested that Trust schools are simply the grant-maintained model reinstated; they are not. What attracted most schools to become GM was the unfairly advantageous funding, now gone; the chance to escape closure or re-organisation plans, now gone; and control of their admissions arrangements, now subject to a Code of Practice and an Adjudicator - much of whose work has involved sorting out and ending arrangements introduced by former GM schools which breach the Code. Flexibility over staff pay and conditions is something schools are reluctant to dabble with, and if the Government thinks flexibility over the National Curriculum is educationally beneficial, it should extend it to all successful schools, not hold it back as an inducement to persuade schools into an otherwise unattractive change.

Food for thought!!!!

- (ii) A further Checklist. From all the wealth of activity this term have you ...
  - undertaken performance management of headteacher?
  - discussed the School Self-Evaluation Form as a governing body?
  - taken forward the staff structure review to a point where it can be completed by the end of this term?
  - taken on board the procedures for the new co-ordinated primary schools admissions scheme?
  - given due consideration to your headteacher's worklife balance?
  - followed up all the other items from September's and October's Updates!??

#### b) Volunteers Sought

(i) DAG Assistant Secretary ( All ) URGENT!!! We are very keen to find someone prepared to support DAG with, amongst other things, the clerking of Executive and Area Meetings. See September's update and/or contact me for details of honorarium etc. Maybe the clerk at your school would be interested??

(ii) There is a vacancy for a Primary School Governor Representative on the Schools' Forum following the resignation of one of the current members. The Schools' Forum is a crucial body consisting of governors, headteachers and representatives from other groups involved in education. It oversees all aspects of schools' funding and has also played a leading role in developing Devon's Vision for Learning. Meetings take place at County Hall on Friday mornings [ about 5 meetings per year ] together with a day conference each autumn. As Chair of the Forum I may be biased but I regard it as one of the most interesting, enjoyable and influential groups that DAG is involved in. Some awareness of financial issues relating to schools is a distinct advantage! Anyone interested or wanting further details please let me know.

(iii) DAG Representative for Changing our Futures Group – outdoor activities and environmental awareness ( All ) Ingrid Fisher (Assistant Director) is currently chair of a DCC Officer action group to consider a project to develop a cross-Directorate educational strategy which encompasses outdoor activities and environmental awareness, with the view to producing a strategy to promote an awareness of sustainability amongst children and young people, help them to enjoy outdoor activities and give them a better understanding of the environment. A governor volunteer is sought to work with this high level group. If you are interested please let me know.

#### c) Consultations ( All )

##### 1. Local

(i) Children's Centres in Devon A paper has been sent in to schools to promote discussions / responses around developing Children's Centres in Devon. This is a major initiative which will affect all areas. The purpose is to improve the outcomes for the children of Devon. This is one of the first steps of the consultation process. There are a series of attached papers designed to inform discussions and gain responses. The zero plus district co-ordinators together with the Children's Trust Local Forums are leading consultation meetings in every locality which is combining with consideration on the Children and Young People's plan. If you would like to contribute your views the deadline for responses [ to [Julie.payne@devon.gov.uk](mailto:Julie.payne@devon.gov.uk) ] is November 30th.

(ii) Extended Schools Development in Devon. A letter with combined consultation on the future development of the extended schools strategy in Devon has been e-mailed to schools. The LEA would welcome your views on these proposals and would like to give you the chance to consider how they might fit in with your planning.

##### 2. National

(i) Turning the Tables: Transforming School Food – Recommendations for the Development and Implementation of Revised School Lunch Standards. This is a consultation on the recommendations of the School Meals Review Panel's Report, Turning the tables: Transforming School Food. The Panel, an independent group with members from a variety of professional backgrounds - field and academic dietitians and nutritionists; headteachers, governors and support staff; and catering and industry professionals – was commissioned by the Secretary of State of Education and Skills to recommend tougher nutritional standards for school lunches. The consultation can be found at: [www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations/](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations/) Responses may be made online at: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations/> or sent by email to: [schoolmeals.consultation@dfes.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:schoolmeals.consultation@dfes.gsi.gov.uk). Written

responses should be sent to: Consultation Unit (School Meals), Area 1A, Castle View House, East Lane, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 2GJ. DfES Deadline 31 December 2005. Deadline for comment to NGC 10 December 2005

d) Meetings in the future - DAG Annual Assembly will be on Saturday March 25th, 10.00a.m - 1.00p.m. Details of programme to follow.

e) Arrived in schools ( All )

(i) paper

- Devon Governor ( including leaflet on DAG )

- information about The School Governors Yearbook 2006. This annual guide gives support to governors throughout the school year. Paper order form sent. Further details from Adamson Publishing 01353 648184

(ii) by e-mail NB Governors are reminded that they can access information about the weekly distribution of e-mails / paperwork to schools by going in to <http://www4.devon.gov.uk/eal/distribution/index.html>

- letter on Extended Schools' Development consultation [ see item c) 1. (ii) ]

f) New Items on Websites ( All unless indicated )

i) DAG ( [www.devon.gov.uk/dag](http://www.devon.gov.uk/dag) )

- Minutes of September Executive Meeting

- NGC November Bulletin Board ( soon! )

( ii ) others

- LSC Funding document ( Secondary ) [ see item h) (iii) below ]

g) Papers available from me

TEN Briefing papers

- Extended Services in Schools: Baseline Survey of Maintained Schools in 2005. This policy briefing summarises the key findings of this survey on the extent and characteristics of extended services being provided throughout England.

- Toward zero exclusion: An action plan for schools and policy makers. This policy briefing summarises key points from the above report published by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) in September 2005. The report includes a number of key recommendations for policy makers, teachers and educationalists who are committed to reducing exclusion levels in our schools.

- Children with special needs in early years - developing good practice This policy briefing summarises key points from the above report released by Ofsted. The report sets out the findings of a survey to evaluate what childcare providers in the private and voluntary sectors are doing to make it easier for children with special needs to access care and education and for these children to have the best possible outcomes. It makes a series of recommendations with a particular focus on the role of local authorities in supporting this group of providers.

- Schools White Paper [ see item a) ]

- Overview and Scrutiny and the Voluntary and Community Sector. This policy briefing summarises the findings of research carried out by the Centre for Public Scrutiny on the relationship between local authority overview and scrutiny committees and the voluntary and community sector. The research explores key issues concerning the context and development of strategic relationships with the sector and identifies a series of examples of 'what works' from the 12 case studies upon which the research is based.

h) Brief items ( All unless indicated )

(i) Feedback from Area Meetings. Apologies but this will not be circulated for several more weeks yet.

(ii) Judy Burgess Gift [ see also Devon Governor ] The DAG gift of a framed early 20th century photo of Judy's street plus a highly sophisticated digital pen was presented to Judy at the conference together with the second instalment of monies donated by schools.

(iii) LSC Funding ( Secondary ) At the beginning of the 2005 autumn term, the LSC issued its guidance for school sixth form funding for 2005/06. The document sets out the changes that the LSC is introducing to the arrangements for funding school sixth forms in 2006/07 and in 2007/08. It is issuing this document now so as to give schools and local authorities as much notice of the changes as possible. The revised arrangements are in line both with the changes to schools' funding which the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) is introducing from April 2006, and with the need for the LSC to prioritise its funding across post-16 learning. Full details of the LSC's post-16 funding strategy for 2006/07 and 2007/08 are explained in its document Priorities for success:Funding for Learning and Skills, available on the LSC website at [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)

(iv) The proposed NGC/NASG Merger. Details of the proposed prospectus can be found on the NGC website [ see item a) for access ]. At the NASG AGM, held on 22nd October, members voted overwhelmingly in favour of the merger. This Saturday members at the NGC AGM will have their say. If this vote is also in favour, the National Governors' Association will come into being on 1st January 2005.

..... and finally

Some thoughts

Does killing time damage eternity?  
How can you tell you have run out of invisible ink?  
If I save time, when do I get it back?  
Have you ever imagined a world without hypothetical situations?

.... and do they come much worse than this?

Brian, the world's leading expert on European wasps and the sounds that they make, is taking a stroll down his local high street. As he passes by the record shop, a sign catches his eye. "Just Released - New LP - Wasps of the World & the sounds that they make - available now"

Unable to resist the temptation, Brian goes into the shop. "I am the world's leading expert on European wasps and the sounds that they make. I'd very much like to listen to the new LP you have advertised in the window."

"Certainly, Sir," says the young man behind the counter. "If you'd like to step into the booth and put on the headphones, I'll put the LP on for you."

Brian, the world's leading expert on European wasps, goes into the booth and puts on the earphones. Ten minutes later, he comes out of the booth and announces, "I am the world's leading expert on European wasps and the sounds that they make and yet I recognised none of those."

"I'm sorry Sir", says the young assistant. "If you'd care to step into the booth, I can let you have another 10 minutes."

Brian, the world's leading expert on European wasps and the sounds they make, steps back into the booth and replaces the headphones. Ten minutes later, he comes out of the booth shaking his head. "I don't understand it", he says, "I am the world's leading expert on European wasps and the sounds that they make, and yet I still can't recognise any of those!"

"I really am terribly sorry", says the young assistant...

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"I've just realised I was playing you the bee side!"