

This is the second update for the Spring Term ... and, hopefully, a little lighter on initiatives and action. Please pass on any information to the relevant governors.

- a) Urgent Matters (All) - Governor Awards : Supporting DAG : DAG Annual Assembly
- b) Volunteers Sought - DAG Executive and Roles (All)
- c) Consultations (All) - School Calendar
- d) Meetings in the future - DAG Annual Assembly (All) : Extended Schools (Secondary) : PPA - Sustainability and Invigilation Guidance (Primary)
- 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) (ii) others
- g) Papers available from me
- h) Brief items (All unless indicated) - CRB Disclosures (Personnel) : SEN Funding (Finance) : Portfolio of Services (Finance) : R. Adcock v T. Blair : PTA Devon (Parents) : NGA : Safer Recruitment online training for Governors (Personnel) : Code of Practice for Governors : Two Committees ... or no Committees? : Offer of help with OFSTED : Job Evaluation (Personnel) : Walkies?

Many thanks to all those of you who responded to our DAG survey over the Christmas period. The nearly 150 responses have guided us in drawing up plans for the future direction of DAG [see item a) (ii) below]. Thanks also to all of you who have replied to the DAG MOT message to let me know you are still there. I'm afraid I cannot acknowledge all your individual replies. If anyone receiving this update did NOT reply to the earlier message please just respond now.

a) Urgent Matters

(i) Governor Awards I have been asked to pass on this message " Nominate a School Governor for the DfES Governor of the Year Award. Governors make a vital contribution to schools through their commitment to helping schools and pupils achieve their full potential - this is your opportunity to offer them the recognition and thanks they deserve within the context of the Teaching Awards scheme - an annual celebration of excellence in education. You can make a nomination online at www.teachingawards.com. Four good reasons to make a nomination:

1. There is no better way to say thank you - making a nomination is a unique chance to give unsung heroes at your school the recognition they deserve
 2. You know that amazing work is carried out in schools every day - this is a fantastic opportunity to shout about it
 3. Winning an Award is a celebration for the whole school community
 4. The Awards give schools the opportunity to network and share best practice with schools locally and nationally
- The Governor Award is new this year ... but hurry - the deadline for nominations is March 1st "

(ii) Supporting DAG An important letter is going out to all schools this week with an outline of the way DAG is planning to develop its work in the future. It draws attention to a document in the DAG Executive section of our website outlining the various roles DAG needs to fill in order to support its work. We would ask you to consider whether you or one of your fellow governors would be prepared to stand for the DAG Executive and become involved in our countywide work. We are also very keen to find a Secretary for the Executive - a current Clerk would be an ideal person to fill this role. Details of what is involved are in the letter and on the website. Please help us to help you!!

(iii) Thanks to all those who have already returned forms / given an indication of whether they are able to attend (or not) the DAG Assembly on March 18th. Your responses will be acknowledged soon. Early replies help our planning - so please let us know in good time whether you or fellow governors will be there (or not).

b) Volunteers Sought - DAG Executive and Roles See Urgent Item a) (ii) above

c) Consultations (All) - School Calendar GBs are currently being asked to agree occasional days and non-pupil days for 2006/07 (deadline April 7th). In addition there is a consultation for the School Calendar for the 2007/08 Academic Year. Please note that these proposals suggest some changes from the normal pattern with three half-term holidays, each of one week; a Christmas holiday running between 20 December-1 January, inclusive, and an Easter holiday running between 7-18 April, inclusive, which would be detached from the Easter Bank Holidays. The Summer holiday in 2008 would run from 26 July-2 September, inclusive.

d) Meetings in the future - DAG Annual Assembly (All) : Extended Schools (Secondary) : PPA - Sustainability and Invigilation Guidance (Primary)

(i) Jean McEntire (Chief Executive of NGA) is our Guest Speaker at the Annual Assembly at County Hall, Exeter on the morning of Saturday March 18th [see item a) (iii) above and correspondence in schools]

(ii) Leading Extended Schools - one-day national conference, 15th June 2006 (Birmingham): NGC has worked with ASCL (formerly SHA) to plan this conference. It is aimed at head teachers, senior staff and governors

of secondary schools. ASCL members will receive the flyer for the conference. There is a charge (£175+VAT) but if a head and governor apply together there is a reduction in the fee. Details will be posted on the NGC website.

(iii) PPA & Sustainability and Invigilation Guidance This is a one day workshop for heads and Chairs of Governors to consider PPA and Sustainability and will also cover new information regarding invigilation. There is no cost for this workshop and £200 is available per school for travel and cover. The workshop will allow participants to:

- Revisit PPA statutory information
- Plan for PPA sustainability in their own context
- Work alongside personnel and finance colleagues
- Become more familiar with new invigilation information.

Three venues across the County

15.2.06 Padbrook Park Hotel, Pavilion Suite - Cullompton

02.3.06 Rosemoor Gardens, Great Torrington

13.3.06 St Cuthberts Conference Centre, Buckfastleigh.

Use dcs online to book your places on this course at <http://www.dcseducation.org/cpd> They can be located under "Subject" Workforce Remodelling.

e) Arrived in schools

(i) paper

- Routes into Training - information for school governors on initial teacher training routes.
 - School Profile - a document from the DfES with details and answers to FAQs
 - The New Guide to the Law
 - A Headlines Special - Achievement Through Collaboration which aims to clarify what is meant by terms such as collaboration, federation and merger. Important reading at a time of falling school numbers!!
- (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>
- Smoking at Work Governing Bodies should review their smoking at work policy in order to comply with future legislation. Visit www4.devon.gov.uk/eal/docs/jan06/0602031.doc
 - Secondary Governors update on Connexions Connexions is the publicly funded specialist careers and advisory service helping 13-19 year olds. Visit www4.devon.gov.uk/eal/docs/jan06/0602013.doc
 - Review of Staffing Structures - Guidance on Procedures and Changes from 1st January 2006 and during the Implementation Period. This guidance is now available as part of the Just 4 Schools staffing review support pack (section 3, Personnel) and is designed to assist schools in moving forward from 1st January 2006 and through the implementation period www4.devon.gov.uk/eal/docs/jan06/0601038.doc

f) New Items on Websites

(i) DAG (www.devon.gov.uk/dag)

- NGC February Bulletin Board
- NGA February Conference Report
- DAG Executive Role Specifications [see item a) (ii) above]

(ii) others

- <http://www.devonsp.org.uk/> The Devon Strategic Plan website that includes the new Input newsletter detailing issues of current importance to all aspects of life in Devon - worth a look!
- http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/learning/schools_forum.htm for details of the important work undertaken by the Schools' Forum [see item h) (ii) below]

g) Papers available from me

- The NGA Jargon Buster which is just a small part of the NGC Welcome to Governance Pack available to schools. The new version of the whole pack, completely revised and re-written, takes account of recent changes to legislation, particularly the Education Act 2005. It is available from NGC, price £3.00 incl. p&p., subject to a minimum transaction fee of £5.00
- Various TEN documents including
 - * Excellence in Cities - this policy briefing summarises a report by Ofsted on scrutiny of various strands of the Excellence in Cities programme during the 2004/05 school year. It makes recommendations for both schools and local authorities.
 - * Children's Rights Report 2005 - this briefing summarises the content and findings of the comprehensive report compiled by the Office of the Children's Rights Director, which is structured in three parts. Part One looks at the work of the Office of the Children's Rights Director (OCD), Part Two explores how services are doing for children, and Part Three summarises children speaking for themselves. It provides signposts and examples that can be of practical use to those who need to improve, or wish to keep improving, their provision for children, and for those with an interest in monitoring provision.
 - * Disabled children in residential placements - this policy briefing summarises a report, commissioned by the DfES. It provides the most comprehensive picture yet of disabled children in residential placements, drawing on education, social care and health data.

* Respect Action Plan - much publicised drive by Tony Blair to push the Respect agenda. This covers a wide range of preventative and punitive measures in areas such as parenting, schools, housing, community and local public services. It draws together existing measures and proposals, principally included in the green paper Youth Matters, and October's Schools White Paper, alongside new initiatives and programmes for parenting and the community. £80 million of new investment is earmarked for the Action Plan.

* Schools White Paper - this briefing summarises developments since publication of the White Paper in October: the DfES Trust Schools Prospectus; the response from the Audit Commission; the report from the Education and Skills Select Committee; and a report from the Sutton Trust. Although 20 pages long, it draws together well over 100 pages of influential source documents into one place, and will be useful to councillors and officers in local authorities; school governors and managers; and a wide range of others involved in discussion of the White Paper and the forthcoming legislation. Comment from TEN " Anybody following developments arising from the White Paper will already be well aware of the high level of media and political interest in the issues, and the considerable volume of comment - much of it ill informed. Perhaps inevitably, though nonetheless regrettably, the debate is fuelled by more ideology than evidence, and many of the exchanges across the House of Commons Dispatch Box have clearly had more to do with politics than education. Schools will undoubtedly resent once again being treated as a political plaything. After a number of years of significant progress on lifting aspiration and achievements - increasingly through constructive collaboration, often brokered and supported by local authorities - the last thing they want is another structural upheaval which is more an act of faith than a product of serious thought and analysis. "

* Reducing re-offending through skills and employment – this Green Paper sets out the Government's plans to reduce re-offending through improving training and education.

* Improving poorly performing schools in England – this briefing summarises a report from the National Audit Office which seeks to analyse factors common to poorly performing schools, and makes recommendations designed to aid local authorities and others in reducing the likelihood of this occurring, turning such schools around and sustaining them after recovery.

h) Brief items

(i) CRB Disclosures - extracts from a DfES letter that hopefully clarifies the situation: " [...] there has been no change in our expectations of when and in what circumstances a CRB Disclosure should be obtained. We have made it clear in successive guidance that CRB checks are strongly recommended as part of the appointment process for new staff working in schools, FE institutions and LEA education services. The change announced by the Secretary of State [in January] is that these existing arrangements are to become compulsory [....] There will continue to be no requirement to obtain a Disclosure on existing staff. Employers will continue to have discretion to seek a Disclosure where they have ground for concern about the suitability of an existing member of staff, and where the member of staff consents. Otherwise, as now, people should only be checked when they seek a new appointment, or have a break in service of more than 3 months, or if they have not previously been eligible for a Disclosure and move to work that involves significantly greater responsibility for children than in their present position. "

(ii) At the recent Schools' Forum meeting headteacher and governor representatives accepted the widespread concerns raised during last term's consultations about SEN funding and agreed NOT to proceed with the SEN funding proposals as suggested in that consultation. This does not mean that there will not be changes in the future but that attempts will be made to make those changes fairer. There will be opportunities for schools to express their views in further consultation that will take place later this year.

(iii) The usual Portfolio for Services will not arrive until later in March. In addition there will be an Alternative Portfolio for a number of the services currently offered to schools exclusively by the Local Authority. For the period April to August schools will be asked to continue with their current purchases (unless they indicate otherwise). The cost of services for this 5 month period will increase in line with inflation unless a special case has been made to the independent Schools Support Services Board. Further details are in a letter from Ray Beale sent on Feb.6th.

(iv) 150 governors from across the United Kingdom were invited to a Reception at No.10 Downing Street on 16th January held to recognize the work of school governors. There was an opportunity to speak to the Prime Minister, Cherie Blair and Jacqui Smith, Schools Minister. Photographs taken at the Reception can be found at www.pm.gov.uk/output/Page8915.asp When you arrive at the page go to photo no. 4 in the top row and enjoy our President, Roger Adcock, sharing Matters Arising, his excellent book of cartoons about governor life, with Tony Blair. If any of you have not yet purchased your copy let me know!

(v) Sadly PTA Devon has ceased to exist. There is an urgent need for parents to have a co-ordinated voice across Devon. Maybe those of you / your colleagues who are parent governors could give some thought to this.

(vi) NGC/NASG Merger is almost complete, NGA is virtually a reality and the first joint board meeting was held on 21st January. A very successful meeting looked at how the new organisation will position itself in the education world and made plans for future working and for providing further services to governors. The official launch takes place today, February 15th, at the House of Commons

(vii) Bichard Enquiry - Safer Recruitment online training for Governors. Please note that there is an obligation for head teachers and an appropriate governor to receive the online training. Take up so far has been light. Governors are urged to take action, as this is important. At this stage, just one governor per school can be nominated to carry out the online training. It is for governing bodies to decide which of their members should be

nominated. Governing bodies should ensure that the nominee is the most appropriate (i.e. the person likely to be involved in most interviews). It is important that a member of the governing body undertakes this training. An online application form will be available on the Safer Recruitment website: www.ncsl.org.uk/saferrecruitment and schools will need to complete this on behalf of their nominated governor. The governor will then receive information in the post about how to access the training.

(viii) At our recent Area meetings a large number of governors spoke very highly of the DGS Effective Governing Body folder. Many had already used it to good effect in establishing clear working practice and a set of Standing Orders. The templates for governor use were welcomed. The Code of Practice / ' Expectations ' section [1.5] was highlighted in particular. The document should help when dealing with problems within a Governing Body (should they arise) as they set out a clear framework for governor responsibilities

(ix) Request for help. A new CoG at a Devon primary would like to make contact with any other primary that is successfully running with just two committees. They would like to pick brains and learn from experience! On this topic, at one Area Meeting one school said that it had ceased running separate committees altogether and just held full GB meetings. If anyone can give or would like further details please let me know.

(x) Another school that had undergone an OFSTED inspection within the new framework offered to give help to other schools in preparing for OFSTED - please contact me for details.

(xi) Job Evaluation Questionnaires Many schools have not returned their job evaluation questionnaires. This could impact on your non-teaching staff. If the questionnaire is not returned from your school non-teaching staff jobs will just be assimilated into the general job description and this may not fit your school. It does need the line manager to do the form with the employee and so does take a bit of time. A reminder letter has gone out.

(xii) Anyone interested in walking the GR10 with us in the Pyrenees for a week at the end of July please get in touch!

.... and finally a touch of real corn

A tourist went to Portsmouth to see Nelson's flagship HMS Victory. On the tour of the ship, the guide pointed out a raised brass plaque on the deck.

"That's where Nelson fell," said the guide.

"The tourist was unimpressed. "I nearly tripped on the damn thing myself."

A customer is ordering a curry in an Indian restaurant.

"Waiter, what is chicken Tarka?"

The waiter replies, "It's the same as chicken tikka but a little 'otter."

I got some travel sweets but they were useless. I ate the whole packet. Didn't go anywhere.

At a nudist colony for intellectuals, two old men are sitting on the porch. One turns to the other and says, "I say, old boy, have you read Marx?" The other says, "Yes, it's these wicker chairs."

Jo Bloggs, not blessed with a high IQ, is looking for a cheap second-hand car and goes into his local garage. He tells the car salesman what he's looking for and the man tells him he's got exactly what he wants. "There's just the one snag", he says, "and that is that the car hasn't got any doors". "Well that's no good", says Jo, "how do I get into it?".