

Final update for the Spring Term. 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.

Thanks to those of you who have already registered for the Annual DAG Assembly on the morning of Saturday April 16th (or sent apologies). You should have received acknowledgement of your response. Ideally I would welcome responses from those who have not yet registered before the end of this term so that there is plenty of time to prepare papers for individual delegates. Look forward to hearing from you.

- a) Urgent Matters - Area Meetings Feedback (All) : No Area Meetings next term (All) : Needs-Led Formula Funding Review (Secondary only) : Budget Pressures / Falling Rolls (Finance) : Attendance Targets (CoGs)
- b) Volunteers Sought (All) - Extended Schools e-mail network
- c) Consultations (Finance) - New Funding Arrangements from 2006/07
- d) Meetings in near future - Torbay Conference (All) : Every Child Matters agenda (All)
- 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/eal/dag) (ii) others
- g) Papers available from me
- h) Brief items - Children's Forum SW News (All) : NGC Manifesto (All) : New Minister for Governance (All) : OFSTED Focus Groups / Self-Evaluation (All) : Capital Strategy and AMP (Buildings & Grounds) : Fundraising for Hospiscare / Children's Hospice SW (All)

..... and finally

a) Urgent Matters

(i) The feedback from issues raised by governors at Area Meetings in South Devon, West Devon and Mid Devon earlier this term is being sent to all DAG affiliated schools by e-mail. It is also being placed on the DAG website. It covers a lot of current issues with topics including the Freedom of Information Act, School Emergency Plan, PROMISE MkIV, Workforce Remodelling, Admission Arrangements, Communication Channels for overnors, School Self-Evaluation and Adult & Community Learning. Responses to questions raised by governors have been assembled over a number of weeks from LEA officers, the National Governors' Council and the National Association of School Governors. Please try to ensure that your Governing Body is aware of this document.

(ii) Contrary to the information in the notice about the DAG Annual Assembly we shall NOT now be holding DAG Area meetings early in the summer term. The DAG Executive realised that with the Assembly on April 16th and Link Governor meetings in late April / early May it would have meant an overload of governor meetings in a very short period of time. A new schedule for all area meetings will follow next term.

(iii) Secondary Sector only. There is currently a Needs Led funding formula review being undertaken in the secondary sector with 2 former Devon heads visiting as many schools as possible to hear views and concerns of HTs and finance officers. The final report will be presented to the schools funding issues group on the 13th April and the Schools Forum on the 17th April. If agreed, there will be a consultation with schools in the Summer Term. Before this date there will be an open meeting for HTs, Chairs of Governors/Finance Committee and Bursars/Senior Finance Officers in order to gain and exchange views prior to recommendations. The meeting will be held on the 21 March 2005 in either Exeter or Tiverton depending on numbers. If you would like to attend please could you e-mail Keith.Parsons@devon.gov.uk or telephone Keith on 01392 382427.

(iv) Ingrid Fisher wrote to schools in early March on budget pressures. Edited extracts from her letter are: " Despite a very good overall budget settlement many of Devon's schools are already experiencing the financial difficulties that falling rolls bring. Schools identified as likely to experience difficulties have been contacted by the LEA with offers of advice and details about Active Redeployment Procedures approved by the Schools' Forum. If your school was not invited to one of the March surgeries but is nevertheless worried about balancing the 05/06 budget against a raft of potential pressures, please ring John Barnard's office (01392 382854). There will be further surgeries next term to give early opportunities to schools which are able to balance in 2005/06 but projecting deficits in 06/07. "

(v) Attendance Targets In late February the LEA was notified through Statutory Instrument 2005 No.58 that the Governing Body of every maintained school other than a special school established in a hospital needs to set an annual target for reducing the number of absences from school. This, in fact, means that your Governing Body will need to set a target for the Academic Year 2005/2006 and submit it to the LEA by 1st April 2005. The data for future years will be collected annually by 31st December. For details see:

<http://www4.devon.gov.uk/eal/docs/feb05/0509009.doc> Needless to say, NGC have been vociferous in its complaints about this impossibly late notice from DfES!

b) Volunteers Sought

DAG has established an e-mail network for governors interested in learning more about / contributing to the debate about Extended Schools. Please contact me if you would like to be added to the network.

c) Consultations

(i) New Funding Arrangements from 2006-07 This consultation deals with detailed proposals for three year budgets for schools aligned to the school year, a new ring-fenced grant to LEAs for school funding (the Dedicated Schools Grant) and a new Single Status Grant for schools, as announced in the Five Year Strategy. A briefing paper on Three Year Budgets has been posted on the NGC and DAG websites. A further paper seeking your comments on the proposals is also on the NGC website. The consultation can be found at:

www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations. Written responses should be sent to DfES, Consultation Unit, Area 2A, Castle View House, East Lane, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 2GJ. E-mail responses should be sent to: SchoolFunding.Consultation@dfes.gsi.gov.uk DfES Deadline 13 May 2005. Deadline for comment to NGC 25 April 2005.

The Devon Schools' Forum will be debating and responding to these proposals at its April meeting. If you have views, however, please send them to the DfES and/or NGC with a copy to me.

d) Meetings in near future

(i) The Torbay Governors conference will be on Saturday, May 7 at the Riviera Centre 10am till lunchtime. Devon governors will be most welcome to attend. Details from Jean Willder JPCW@K-swinford.freeseve.co.uk

(ii) I have details of a conference run by Barnardo's entitled ' Making Partnerships Work: delivering what children and families want and need '. It will cover issues related to the Every Child Matters agenda and take place on the 28th April in Birmingham. If you would be interested in attending please let me know and I will send you a booking form.

e) Arrived in schools

(i) paper

- Freedom of Information Act 2000 - Summary Guidance for Governing Bodies
- Devon Governor - Spring 2005
- Every Child Matters Outcomes Framework

(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>

- Proposed changes to the school day - any proposed changes to the school day should initially be made with Keith Anderson, at County Hall. www4.devon.gov.uk/eal/docs/feb05/0509014.doc
- Official Opening Ceremonies - a reminder in the run up to the local government elections on 5th May of the protocols for opening ceremonies and launches. www4.devon.gov.uk/eal/docs/feb05/0509034.doc

f) New Items on Websites

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

- Area Meetings Feedback Spring Term 2005
- March 2005 Bulletin Board (in NGC Bulletin Boards)
- Paper relating to proposed merger of NGC and NASG (in NGC Reports/Commentaries)
- Briefing paper on proposals for 3-year funding (in NGC Briefings)

(ii) others

- Look on the Government South-West Office website (yes, it does exist and provide some useful support!) www.gosw.gov.uk/forum for details in particular about developments relating to the Every Child Matters agenda.

- School Teachers' Review Body Report 2005 outlining the new pay structure with the creation of the new teaching and learning responsibility payments and the introduction of the Excellent Teacher Scheme from September 2006. You can download the full report from www.teachernet.gov.uk or if you want the summary you just have to download the first part.

g) Papers available from me

TEN documents provide very useful insights into recent legislation, reports and proposals. Please let me know if you would like copies of any of the following

- A briefing outlining the main provisions of the Education Bill currently before Parliament as they affect England. The Bill rewrites the law on school inspection, requires competitions for all replacement secondary schools, extends the remit of and renames the Teacher Training Agency and makes changes to the local authority's role, including significant changes to school funding.

- (secondary governors) 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper (this one has a very useful concluding summary) This White Paper sets out the Government's implementation plan for 14-19 educational reform. It modifies in important ways the agenda set out by the Working Group led by Mike Tomlinson, which produced its report and recommendations in October 2004.

- New School Funding Arrangements, 2006-07 This DfES consultation follows the commitment, in the Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners (July 2004) to provide schools with three year budgets. It proposes the introduction of a new ring-fenced grant - the Dedicated Schools Grant - to fund the newly defined "Dedicated Schools Budget", which will be based on current levels of funding provided by LEAs, converging over time to the level dictated by a national formula. This will be similar to that now used to determine the Schools Block of Formula

Spending Share (FSS). Overall local authority funding will be adjusted to accommodate this shift from general to specific grant.

- Ofsted: Managing Challenging Behaviour This policy briefing summarises key points from the above Ofsted report published on 1 March 2005, which analyses actions taken to manage and improve behaviour in early years centres, mainstream and special schools, pupil referral units and colleges. Findings and recommendations made in the report are relevant to education practitioners, parents and LEAs in developing practices to meet and respond to the needs of pupils with challenging behaviour.

h) Brief items

(i) Children's Forum SW News. This is issue 7 of a newsletter with details on national policy developments on the Every Child Matters - Change for Children agenda. Topics include the Ten Year Childcare Strategy, the End Child Poverty campaign and the SW Learning Programme. It can be accessed and responded to at www.gosw.gov.uk/forum

(ii) NGC Manifesto After an extended consultation period (since 13th November 2004), the final version has been an agenda item for approval at all NGC Regional Meetings. The document will be printed and placed on websites and be available for use by governors locally and nationally in the run up to the General Election.

(iii) There is a new Minister with responsibility for Governance. Derek Twigg has taken over the responsibility for governance matters from David Miliband. NGC and NASG are to meet with the new Minister on 5 April 2005. The meeting will be reported on in the May Bulletin Board.

(iv) Ofsted Focus Groups (9th, 10th and 11th February): Report from NGC " In February Ofsted held three focus groups in Sheffield, London and Birmingham for NGC members. Ofsted arranged the meetings in order to seek views on the new inspection arrangements and the involvement of governors. All three meetings saw high quality discussion on the new arrangements in general and the involvement of governors in particular. The view round all three tables was that shorter sharper inspections were to be welcomed, but they must involve governors. Colin Humphreys, representing Ofsted, reported that, in the majority of pilot inspections, there had been governor involvement. It was the very strong view of those at all three meetings that governors must be involved pre-inspection and that it was absolutely vital that they were at the post inspection feedback meeting. There was further discussion on what input governors should have in the self-evaluation form with the consensus view being that although senior managers should draft it, the governing body should be informed at all stages of the document and should sign it off. A more detailed note of the discussions will shortly be posted on the NGC website. I attended the Birmingham meeting and can concur fully with these comments. Pre-inspection work involves the new self-evaluation process. Watch this space!!!

(v) Capital Strategy and Asset Management Planning Update – March 2005. A letter has gone in to schools from Steve Daw drawing governors' attention to the following issues: AMP data requirements : updating of schools' floor plans : amended project officer areas for schools : finance : forthcoming meetings and deadlines : current headteacher Premises Awareness Training Courses.

(vi) I shall be away for the second half of the summer term during which period alternative arrangements will be made for governors to contact DAG. My wife and I are undertaking a 2 month long 500 mile walk along the Pyrenean mountains in the summer (doing the equivalent of climbing Mt. Everest from sea level nearly 6 times in the process!!). As well as enjoying ourselves we are raising money for Hospiscare and Children's Hospice SW. If any of you would like to join us for part of the time (we already have a number of friends doing so) please let me know and we can make plans. Alternatively you or your school might like to consider organising a sponsored activity for Hospiscare / Children's Hospice SW to add to the funds ... or just to sponsor us directly. If so, please let me know and I will send you details. You will be able to follow our progress at www.hospiscare-devon.org.uk/fundraising.htm

..... and finally

Chuckles - some suggested answer phone messages

"Hello I am David's answer phone. What are you?"

"Hi, I'm probably home. I'm just avoiding talking with someone I don't like. Leave me a message and if I don't call back, it's you."

"At the sound of the tone, you may leave a message. You have the right to remain silent. However, anything you say will be recorded and may be used by us."

"Hello. If you are a burglar, then we are probably at home cleaning our weapons right now and can't come to the phone. Otherwise, we are probably not at home and it is safe to leave a message."