

NGA News Briefing 30/4/10

The NGA weekly news briefing is an essential document for any governor, clerk or governor support officer. This briefing gives details of new research, government consultation papers, policy announcements and legislation, together with a summary of recent education stories in the media.

SATs Boycott

The Department for Children Schools and Families (DSCF) finally issued a letter from the Secretary of State (Ed Balls MP) on Wednesday 28 May 2010. The NGA is deeply disappointed with the guidance which, in our view, suggests a legally dubious course of action which may well inflame the situation. The NGA has sought legal advice on the Department's idea that '...governors should consider instructing their head to stay off the premises...' and our advice is that this could probably only be done by way of formal suspension. Although suspension is meant to be a 'neutral act', the NGA is not sure that it would be viewed as such given that this is a national action and not a 'rogue head' taking an individual stance. In the NGA's view it would also have a significant negative impact on future relations between the head and the governing body. The NGA is, therefore, not recommending that governing bodies should instruct their head to stay away from the premises.

The NGA has been updating its Q&A regularly each version is dated, please make sure you are looking at the latest version. We updated it in response to the DCSF letter: version 4 dated 29 April. The NGA's Q&A brief can be found via the attached link – [SATs Boycott](#). Please do distribute this to any other interested party as we are concerned about the understandable level of confusion amongst some governors now that there is conflicting advice in the public domain.

The Local Government Employers' organisation has also issued advice to local authorities. This advice is primarily on a very specific issue relating to the possible deduction of pay for partial performance of duties. The LGE can be viewed via the attached link [LGE Advice](#)

The DCSF's letter and briefing can be found via the attached link - [DCSF Guidance on Key Stage 2 tests](#)

If you do have a question which we have not included please email either [Emma Knights](#) or [Gillian Allcroft](#) and we'll update the Q&A.

Sex and Relationships Education

You may recall that last year the NGA in conjunction with the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations and the National Association of Head Teachers working in association with an independent research body and supported by Durex carried out a survey on Sex and Relationships education. The initial results of the survey were announced via a press release on Thursday 28th April. 253 school leaders, 154 governors and 1003

parents of school-age children responded to the survey. The three groups had similar views across many of the questions.

For example there was broad agreement about the age at which different SRE topics could be introduced, and some, such as respect, behaving responsibly and protecting yourself from harm were thought suitable to be taught to Key Stage 1 pupils aged 4-7 years. Puberty was felt to be suitable for children in Key Stage 2 (9-11 years-old) while contraception choices were felt to be more suitable for children in Key Stage 3 (12-14 years-old).

Parents also felt that SRE lessons should not end at school, with 84% saying they should also be followed up in the home.

The survey also highlighted that many teachers felt inadequately trained to teach sex and relationships education.

The initial results can be viewed via the attached link [SRE Survey Results](#)

Duty of Care

You will have no doubt read in the papers or seen on the news the story of Peter Harvey the Mansfield teacher who was yesterday cleared by the jury of attempted murder and grievous bodily harm with intent. Mr Harvey had admitted the offence of causing grievous bodily harm without intent.

This is clearly an unusual and extreme case, but it once again highlights the issue of stress in school staff.

Governing bodies have an over-riding duty of care to their employees either as the direct employer (voluntary aided, foundation schools) or as the body exercising the employer responsibilities (community and voluntary controlled schools). Governing bodies need to ensure that they have appropriate policies in place to deal with such issues. The NASUWT, Mr Harvey's union have said that "Employers need to be far more sophisticated in recognising and supporting teachers with mental health problems. The NASUWT will be pressing the Government to look at the whole issue of sickness absence policies and the quality of support teachers are receiving."

In fact a useful booklet was produced on this subject by the DCSF in 2008 this might be a good time for governing bodies to reacquaint themselves with the issues.

[Common mental health problems: Supporting school staff by taking positive action](#)

Clare's Blog

Clare's latest blog can be viewed via the attached link - [Chair's Blog](#)

This is the newsletter in full; it will not be available on the website until Tuesday 4th May. The newsletter will then be available to view via the attached link [NGA Newsletters](#) – remember you will need your email address/membership number and password to view the newsletters.

Contact NGA

By e-mail governorhq@nga.org.uk - or by phone at 0121-237 3780

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