

## **NGA News Briefing 210510**

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.

We did think this would be a quiet week, but actually we've got a lot to report.

### **Communications Manager**

The NGA is pleased to announce that our new Communications Manager, Pardeep Mattu has taken up post.

Pardeep's experience includes working in communications for a range of private and public organisations, including the NHS, local authorities and education organisations. She will be working on a range of marketing and communications methods including the website, research, publications, NGA events and working with the media. Communications is a key area of development for the NGA who are aiming to enhance their profile and increase membership numbers, whilst continuing to provide an excellent service to existing members.

### **NGA Governance Awards 2011**

Nominations are now open for the National Governors' Association Awards for Outstanding School Governance 2011. There are two prestigious awards:

- the NGA's and Governor Wales Outstanding Clerk Award (England & Wales) and
- NGA's Outstanding Governing Body (England only).

There will be both national and regional winners, which will be awarded at a national ceremony in March 2011.

The closing date is **15th November 2010 (12 Noon)**, so there is plenty of time to spread the word or to nominate someone yourself. Don't let great work go unnoticed. All our members have supported our first 'ask' in our manifesto of raising the profile of governors and the importance of school governance. These awards are a very good way of joining in – please do so.

Nomination forms are now available via the attached link - [NGA Awards 2011](#).

### **Department for Education – Policy Statement**

There is still very little coming out of the new Department – it has issued just three press statements since it formally came into being last week.

These are the announcement of:

- Michael Gove as the Secretary of State
- The non-announcement that no decisions have been made about BSF and;

- A link to the Government announcement of the full coalition programme for Government.

The Departmental press notices can be read via the attached link - [DfE Press Notices](#).

The coalition programme for Government is thirty pages long and split into various policy sections – the schools section can be found in Section 26 (page 28). The full programme can be downloaded via the attached link - [Coalition Programme for Government](#).

The programme is fairly broad brush, in that it sets out the overall aims, but doesn't contain any specific details. For example, the so called 'free schools' are in there, but we still don't have any detail about the mechanisms for setting them up. Key headlines are that the government will:

- Promote the reform of schools in order to ensure new providers can enter the state school system in response to parental demand
- Give all schools greater freedom over the curriculum
- Ensure all schools are held properly to account
- Fund a significant premium for disadvantaged pupils from outside the schools budget by reductions in spending elsewhere
- Reform the rigid national pay and conditions rules and give schools greater freedoms to pay good teachers more and deal with poor performance
- Simplify the regulations of standards in education and target inspection on areas of failure
- Give anonymity to teachers accused by pupils and take other measures to protect against false allegations
- Create more flexibility in the exams systems so that state schools can offer qualifications like the International GCSE
- Reform league tables so that schools are able to focus on and demonstrate the progress of children of all abilities.
- Give heads and teachers the power they need to ensure discipline in the classroom and promote good behaviour
- Improve diagnostic assessment for school children and prevent the unnecessary closure of special schools and remove the bias towards inclusion
- Improve vocational education and create new Technical Academies
- Keep external assessment but review how Key Stage 2 tests operate
- All new Academies to have inclusive admissions policies
- Work with faith groups to enable more faith schools and facilitate inclusive admissions policies in as many of these schools as possible.

The Queen's Speech takes place on **Tuesday 25 May** and we are anticipating an Education Bill. The Government has previously said that it would like some of its measures to be in place by September, if that is the case then the NGA would expect to see a full copy of the Bill shortly after the Queen's Speech.

### **Code of Conduct**

The National Governors' Association has for a number of years recommended that governing bodies adopt a code of practice which sets out the purpose of the governing

body and describes the appropriate relationship between individual governors, the whole governing body and the leadership team of the school. We recommend that the code should be thoroughly discussed so that the whole governing body has ownership of it, and, once it has been adopted, the governors should be asked to review it and sign it, on an annual basis ideally at the first meeting in the autumn term. NGA has included a specimen code of practice in our annual publication 'Welcome to Governance'. We are now in the process of updating this code for the September 2010 edition of 'Welcome to Governance', and this year are encouraging partners to comment on it and where they are in agreement to endorse it and encourage its widespread use. We know that many governing bodies do already have a code of conduct and indeed ours has been based on a number of codes already in use. However there are also many governing bodies which do not yet have a code of conduct and the NGA wants to help spread this good practice. Each governing body may want to tailor this recommended code to their own situation, but this gives them a starting point which is built on the best practice from around the country. Thanks to all of you who have already contributed to this code in the past and I look forward to receiving any other comments on this updated version by 21st June to [emma.knights@nga.org.uk](mailto:emma.knights@nga.org.uk). The final version will be available in mid-July and we hope that governing bodies without a code will consider adopting this one, or a variation on it, at their autumn meeting.

The Code of Conduct can be found on the NGA website via the attached link – [The NGA Code of Conduct](#)

### **SATs Boycott**

Just when we thought questions over the SATs boycott were dying down we have had a number of queries from concerned governors about letters received from their local authorities. In some cases the letters are simply instructions on how much pay they must deduct from their headteacher following the boycott, or in other cases a request for the chair of governors to fill in a form giving the name and payroll details of any staff who took part in the boycott. What these letters have in common is that they seem to have completely missed the fact that governors are either the direct employers of school staff (foundation and voluntary aided schools) or exercise employer responsibilities (community and voluntary controlled schools). In other words it is the governing body's decision whether or not to deduct any pay from staff involved in the boycott and how much to deduct.

It is perfectly legitimate to deduct pay from an employee who takes part in industrial action; this is not a penalty it is a recognition that the employee did not carry out the full range of their duties. The fact that in many schools headteachers whilst not carrying out the 2010 SATs did test the children in some other way is immaterial in this situation – the duty was to undertake the 2010 SATs and any other work carried out does not replace this. The employer, therefore, has the right to deduct a commensurate amount of pay.

The key fact that has been omitted from some local authority communications is that this is a governing body decision. We have also been informed that some local authorities have suggested that a decision to deduct pay could be made through chair's action. The NGA does not agree. Chair's action is to be taken when a

decision is so urgent that to delay it would be detrimental to the interests of the school, any pupil at the school or his parent, or a person who works at the school. While local authorities may want to push through deductions in their next payroll it is difficult to see how not doing this could fall into any of the categories for Chair's action.

The NGA strongly recommends that whatever decision the governing body determines this should be explained and minuted in a formal governing body meeting (whether that is a full governing body meeting or an appropriate committee meeting).

The NGA's guidance remains on the website for any governors still grappling with the issue of whether to deduct pay or not. The guidance can be downloaded via the attached link [NGA SATs Boycott Guidance](#).

### **NGA Finance Committee – Qualified Accountant**

As you may have seen in this week's *Matters Arising*, NGA is seeking a qualified accountant to serve on its Finance Committee. This is a voluntary position on a committee which meets four times a year. If you are willing to contribute to the work of the NGA, please contact NGA's Chief Executive, Emma Knights: [emma.knights@nga.org.uk](mailto:emma.knights@nga.org.uk) by **7th June**.

### **Clare's Blog**

This week Clare talks (briefly) about the new Government and the delights (or otherwise) of FMSiS – her latest blog can be read via the attached link - [Chair's Blog](#).

### **Contact NGA**

By e-mail [governorhq@nga.org.uk](mailto:governorhq@nga.org.uk) - or by phone at 0121-237 3780.

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If you think this news briefing is a valuable resource, you should consider becoming a NGA member - more information on membership can be found by following this link - [Join the NGA](#).