



Lord Hill of Oareford

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools

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Chairs of Governing Bodies of Maintained Schools

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Dear Chairs of Governing Bodies,

Following a recent meeting with Emma Knights, the Chief Executive of the National Governors' Association (NGA), I agreed to write to chairs of governing bodies and provide some information about academy governance arrangements which you and your fellow governors may find useful. The issues that Emma and I discussed are detailed below.

I would however firstly like to thank you all for the work you do as school governors. Some 300,000 of you give generously of your time and experience to help your local schools and improve the education and life chances of our children. I am incredibly grateful to you and know how demanding this is and what an important contribution you make. You and your fellow governors are often the unsung heroes of the school system. We want to encourage more people to become governors, and to experience the real sense of reward from putting something back into the community.

Academy Governance Model

The constitution of an academy governing body is agreed with the Secretary of State before the academy opens and is set out in the articles of association for each academy. Academy trusts have two layers of governance; the members, who operate at a strategic level with ultimate control over the direction of the academy trust, and the governors (often referred to as the governing body) with responsibility for day-to-day management and operation of the academy trust. The proposed governance model suggests various structures and provides for a great degree of flexibility and choice. There are some core requirements such as having a minimum of two parent governors. Of course, we do appreciate the important contribution that parent governors bring to schools and academies and so it may be that some academies may wish to have a much larger parent representation and it is right that they are free to make that

choice. I have recently agreed that up to a third of an academy's governing body may be made up of staff governors (including the Principal).

If you have any queries on academy governance then you are welcome to contact the Academies Policy Team. The contact is Alison Powell, who can be contacted by email at alison.powell@education.gsi.gov.uk or by telephone on 01325 735429.

Collaboration

All academies must be at the heart of their community and must promote community cohesion and share their facilities with other schools and the wider community. This requirement is part of our model funding agreement. We also expect that outstanding schools will establish mechanisms for supporting weaker schools.

Consulting interested parties about becoming an academy

Governing bodies of schools which wish to convert to academies will be required by the provisions of the Academies Act to carry out a consultation on the conversion process with appropriate people before entering into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State. The consultation can be carried out before or after an academy order has been applied for, or granted. More information on this and the process for converting to academy status can be found on our website at www.education.gov.uk/academies.

An open invitation

I found the meeting with the NGA extremely helpful and informative and I hope we can continue to work with the NGA in the future. I would particularly like to hear from existing governors with ideas on how we can remove any barriers which may prevent people from becoming governors. If you would like to make any suggestions, please email me on school.governance@education.gsi.gov.uk.

I look forward to hearing from you if you have any suggestions.

JONATHAN HILL
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools

