

Governors

Termly newsletter

PUTTING FITNESS FIRST

How Cedars Upper School has put health and fitness at the top of its agenda

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ON THE BALL

Councillor Brian Rigby has been a driving force at Ashton-on-Mersey School

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Prime Minister thanks school governors

The Prime Minister recognises governors' work

More than 150 school governors were invited to a special Downing Street reception, hosted by Tony Blair.

He wanted to thank them for the important part they play in improving the education of children in Britain. "Children need the drive that governors bring to the system. Governors are a great example of voluntary work. Thank you for the work you do," said the Prime Minister.

He added that the education system was in the process of change, and it was important for governors to take on a broader interest. "We

can't afford to achieve just 20 per cent or 60 per cent of excellence in schoolchildren. We will fall behind as an economy. We need to be raising standards the entire time, and for that, your input is important".

Among the guests was Khalid Sharif, chair of the Association of Muslim Governors. He has been involved in learning projects for many years and is a director of an educational charity, which runs an east London 'supplementary' school.

He sees supplementary schools as being key to solving the problem of Muslim schoolchildren falling behind in education.

"It's a good start for a serious issue that hasn't been addressed as it should have been. We really



appreciate the support and recognition from the Prime Minister."

Also present was Jean McEntire, chief executive of the National Governors' Association and a school governor for 20 years. She considered the reception to be a good opportunity to raise the profile of

governors. "They have an important responsibility but are often not recognised. It is fantastic that we're getting this profile," she said.

This view was supported by Mark Mitchell, who has been a governor for 10 years, during which time he has

helped build a new special school in Portsmouth. "This reception is a good recognition of the contribution members make on a voluntary basis in local communities. I'm delighted to be here."

FOR MORE INFO: www.number10.gov.uk

Four governors receive honours

Four school governors had their services to education recognised in the New Year 2006 Honours List.

Peter Bird is governor at Dearne Valley College and chair at the Dearne High School in South Yorkshire. Prior to that, he was chair of governors at Thurnscoe School, and a governor of Gooseacre Primary School. He has been a governor for 15 years.

Grace Morgan has been a governor at John Hanson Community School and Test Valley School in Hampshire for more than 25 years, and chair for more than 15 years. She was involved in the relocation project for John Hanson Community School.

Robin Rhoderick-Jones has been chair of governors at the West of England School in Exeter, a residential special school of charitable status catering for 220 visually impaired pupils. It also has a unit for children with multiple disabilities. Under his chairmanship, the school has received two excellent Ofsted reports, and he has helped raise funds for a water-therapy centre.

Lastly, Brian Rigby has been chair of governors at Ashton-on-Mersey school in Manchester for more than 15 years. Turn to page 8 for an interview with Brian.

WIN your school SEMERC software!

Just tell us what you think



Governors has teamed up with Granada Learning to give governors the chance to win the complete SEMERC Track series of CD-ROMs and workbooks.

The subscription will be awarded to the best letter sent to us for use in the autumn term issue of *Governors*. We value your feedback, top tips and responses to articles. For a chance to win, turn to page 7.

Reconstitution deadline

The deadline for reconstitution is fast approaching. Governing bodies have until 31 August to reconstitute and adopt a new instrument of governance under the School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2003 SI 2003 No 348.

FOR MORE INFO: www.governornet.co.uk/constitution



Alan Johnson

New ministerial team

Alan Johnson has joined the DfES as Secretary of State for Education and Skills. Previous jobs have included Secretary of State at the Department of Trade and Industry and Minister of State for Schools and 14-19 Learners.

Jim Knight is the new Minister of State for Schools and 14-19 Learners. And Andrew Adonis remains in his post as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools.

Improving behaviour

The DfES has issued good practice guidelines for improving behaviour in schools, developed by the Practitioners' Group on School Behaviour and Discipline, chaired by Sir Alan Steer. *Learning Behaviour: Principles and Practice – What Works in Schools* will complement key reforms contained in the Education and Inspections Bill to give teachers a statutory power to discipline pupils.

FOR MORE INFO: <http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk?dfes-0281-2006>

Update on the Education Bill



The Education and Inspections Bill 2006, which takes forward the reforms outlined in the Schools White Paper *Higher Standards, Better Schools For All* has passed its second reading vote in the House of Commons and is due its third reading this month (May).

Alongside measures to improve school food, the bill will

enable all schools to become Trust schools by forming links with external partners who will be able, should the school choose, to appoint the majority of the governing body. Trust schools will own their own assets, employ their own staff under the terms of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions document (STPCD), set their admission arrangements, and be able to apply for additional flexibilities.

The legislation will also tighten the admissions framework to ensure fair access for all by reaffirming the ban on new selection by ability. There will be a ban on interviewing potential pupils; strengthened status for the Code on School Admissions; new powers for admissions forums; and an extended duty on local authorities to provide free transport for the most disadvantaged families.

Local authorities will also take on a new strategic role – including duties to promote choice, diversity and high standards for every child; a duty to respond to parental concerns about the quality of local schools; acting as decision-maker on school organisation matters; and responsibility for providing a range of engaging activities for young people.

FOR MORE INFO: www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/educationandinspectionsbill

Recording racist incidents

Governors have a duty under the race-relations legislation to ensure that their school promotes race equality.

Under the Every Child Matters agenda, schools have a duty of care towards their pupils, including making sure that they are safe from harm and grow up able to make a positive contribution to society. Race-relations legislation also gives schools and local authorities a duty to promote race equality.

Tackling racism and racist bullying is an essential part of this. Earlier this year, the DfES published

guidance on countering racist bullying. To complement this advice, the DfES has just issued new guidance to help governors support their schools in recording and reporting racist incidents. The new, voluntary guidance is available online at TeacherNet.

The guidance sets out key principles underlying an effective policy to address racist incidents. It also explains how recording and reporting racist incidents can form part of your school's self-evaluation process, helping to set priorities that promote race equality.



FOR MORE INFO: [Counteracting Racist Bullying guidance – www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour)

Standardised assessment

All local authorities in England are able to benefit from the new Common Assessment Framework for children and young people (CAF). This is a standardised assessment that can be used across all children's services.

The CAF takes into account all the factors surrounding a child, both family and environmental, and is designed to provide schools with easier access to a range of services. Children and families are fully involved in the process and give consent for information to be shared, which reduces the need for them to repeat the same information through numerous assessments. Early identification of issues ensures that problems can be addressed before they become serious.

Schools played a key role in the CAF trials, and more than two-thirds of local authorities used the CAF in 2005/2006. Widespread support was received from both

headteachers and front-line teaching staff, who have seen a positive impact on the lives of children, young people and their families.

The CAF was developed as part of the Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme. It will help practitioners working in schools meet the duties specified in S.10 and S.11 of the Children Act 2004 – to co-operate and to safeguard and promote welfare.

FOR MORE INFO:

■ **Updated guidance for practitioners and managers, based on evidence and feedback from the trials, are available from www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/caf**

■ **On how schools and governors can help deliver the Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme is available from www.ecm.gov.uk/schools**

New funding for schools

New funding for schools announced in the Budget in March will help schools deliver personalisation.

An additional £220m in 2006-07, and £365m in 2007-08, will be paid direct to schools to help them to provide greater personalisation of learning in and beyond the school day. The extra funding will be added to the School Standards Grant, but will be heavily weighted for deprivation and prior

attainment. This means the direct payments received by an average primary school from the School Standards Grant will increase from £31,000 in 2005-06 to £44,000 in 2007-08; and for an average secondary school from £98,000 in 2005-06 to £190,000 in 2007-08. This increase is on top of funding for personalisation in the Dedicated Schools Grant.

FOR MORE INFO: www.teachernet.gov.uk/personalisationfunding



Rebuilding programme

Teachers have until 14 June to voice their opinions on the proposed primary rebuilding programme, which could see more than £7bn extra being spent on primary schools by 2022, on top of the current £2bn a year.

The proposals involve demolishing or rebuilding more than 900 'worst condition' schools, and significantly improving a further 8,000 premises across the country. All other primary schools will continue to receive annual funding for maintenance and improvements.

FOR MORE INFO:

- www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/resourcesfinanceandbuilding
- www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations

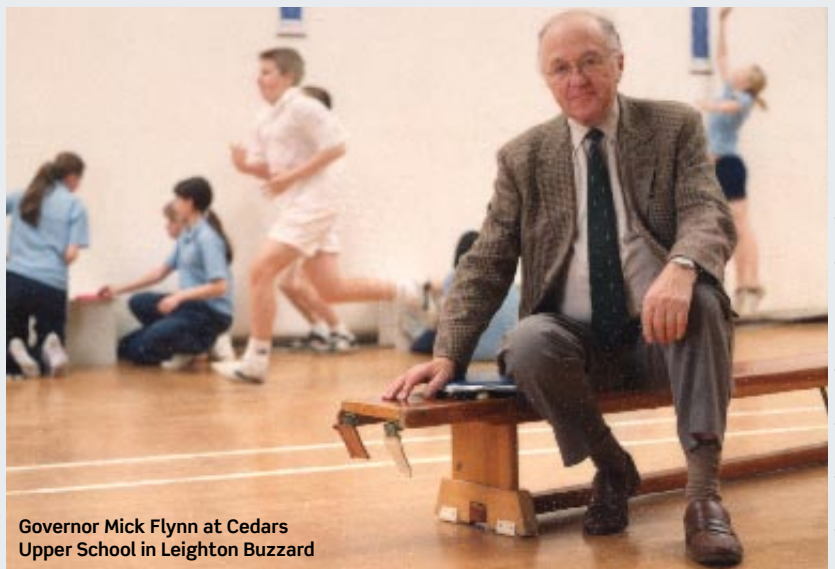
Recruiting headteachers

Governors must spend more time defining what they want in a new headteacher before they start the recruitment process, recommends the interim report from the National College for School Leadership research on recruitment and appointment of headteachers.

Deepening their knowledge of the school and thinking about its

future development will help governors to identify the specific leadership qualities the new headteacher needs to have. To identify these qualities, governors can use the school improvement plan and Ofsted reports; look at self-evaluation data; and consult staff, pupils and parents to gather their views.

FOR MORE INFO: www.ncsl.org.uk/leadingappointments



Governor Mick Flynn at Cedars Upper School in Leighton Buzzard

Words: Kath Stathers Picture: Gareth Boden

Putting fitness first

As governor Mick Flynn read more and more reports about British school children's unhealthy eating habits and the rise of obesity in the country, he wanted to do something to make sure the children at his school, Cedars Upper School in Leighton Buzzard, took pride in being healthy. For him, this meant knowing the importance of exercise as well as healthy eating. He wanted every child to have an ongoing awareness of their own fitness and the realisation that maintaining that fitness was their responsibility.

At a governor's meeting, he proposed the idea of implementing fitness tests that each child would do once a term, and the results would go on their school report. He called it 'The Cedars Standard'. "The tests measure flexibility and stamina. You're competing only against yourself," says Mick. "They're well-known tests that sports clubs and the military use. During their time here, pupils would build up their own record and have their own targets that they want to aim for."

The idea was well received by the governors and the head. The equipment needed for the tests came to just under £700, which Mick and his fellow governors raised themselves. The PE department scheduled time into existing classes for when the tests would be carried out, and Mick announced the launch of the

scheme in a school assembly last September. He also arranged for the local Royal Marines Careers Office to get involved in the launch. "I was in the Marines for my National Service in the 1950s," says Mick. "So I knew what kind of guys they would be, and how they'd inspire the children."

Dressed in uniform, and flexing their muscles, they motivated the children, keeping them going when otherwise they might have given up. "There are definitely one or two out there who I wouldn't expect to be going still," says PE teacher Gary Hadlington, observing the running exercise.

Between tests, the kids do two hours of PE a week, in line with Government targets, to increase their fitness levels. "We've got good facilities here and some sporty kids, but The Cedars Standard will raise awareness across the board. And if they do get the bug, we can give them more advice on fitness and nutrition, bolted on to PE," continues Gary.

The kids are full of enthusiasm for the scheme, and they welcome the Marines' involvement. "You want to do well," says Year 9 pupil Luke, "but the Marines definitely make you work harder."

An added bonus of the Marines' presence was that the local press came to the launch, and as every school knows, positive news stories do wonders for boosting a school's profile and morale. **G**

THE CEDARS STANDARD WILL RAISE AWARENESS ACROSS THE BOARD

RESOURCES

Drugs in schools

Reprinted *Drugs: Guidance for Schools* is now available for order via www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications (ref: DfES/0092/2004). This document provides guidance to schools on all matters relating to drugs and is aimed at all staff in primary, secondary and special schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) in England.

In addition, a new resource – *Drugs Information Pack for Schools (KS3)* – will be available from June to help schools promote awareness and understanding of drugs. A comprehensive drug education programme is required to achieve Healthy School status and the pack will include information and guidance for teachers, classroom activities and leaflets to hand out to pupils.

FOR MORE INFO: To pre-order a pack for your school, telephone 0845 60 222 60, quoting ref: 0305-2006BKT-EN

Governor toolkit on extended schools

Chairs of governors should have received the new extended schools toolkit. The guide looks at the governance issues of delivering extended services – including community consultation, finance, and operational implications. It provides examples and case studies of the different delivery models that can be used to run extended activities. These include co-location with a Sure Start children's centre and delivering with existing local providers; advice on consulting with families and the wider community, and guidance on the strategic role of the governing body.

FOR MORE INFO: The toolkit can be downloaded from: www.teachernet.gov.uk/extendedschools

Safe schools charter

Schools are being urged to sign up to the Safe Schools Charter, launched by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust.

The Charter aims to support schools in their endeavours to become safer places for those who work and learn in them. Taking part will help schools to develop appropriate policies and procedures for improving personal safety, and encouraging them to spend more time teaching children about personal safety, including how to defuse violence and aggression.

Schools that sign up to the Charter will receive a certificate, a poster and an activity pack.

FOR MORE INFO: www.suzylamplugh.org or telephone 020 7091 0014

WEBSITES

■ www.governornet.co.uk

Useful information for all school governors

■ www.nasg.org.uk

National Association of School Governors (NASG). Tel: 0121 643 5787

■ www.ngc.org.uk

National Governors' Council (NGC). Tel: 0121 616 5104

■ www.governors.fsnet.co.uk

Information for School and College Governors (ISCG) Tel: 020 7229 0200

■ www.sgoss.org.uk

SGOSS recruits and brokers volunteers to become governors in schools. Tel: 0870 241 3883

■ www.teachernet.gov.uk/schoolinfocus

Celebrating innovative work in schools

Putting geography on the map



Schools Minister Andrew Adonis has announced the Action Plan for Geography – a new package of support of nearly £2m to boost geography in primary and secondary schools.

The Action Plan contains a range of initiatives delivered by the Geographical Association and the Royal Geographical Society to revitalise

geography and recognise excellence in the teaching of the subject.

One of the flagship projects of the Action Plan will be a new geography ambassadors scheme, which will bring geographers from business and universities into the classroom to show young people how relevant geography is today. This

will be supported by an online ambassadors scheme.

Funds will also go to providing a national website for geography teachers. There will also be fieldwork and leadership training, new Quality Marks for schools and chartered geography status for teachers, as well as additional resources for teachers of the Key Stage 3 curriculum.

To mark the launch, every secondary school in England will receive a copy of Michael Palin's *Himalaya*. **FOR MORE INFO:** From September 2006, details of the Action Plan projects can be found at www.geographyteachingtoday.org.uk. Until then, updates will be on www.geography.org.uk and www.rgs.org

Pupils to decide on youth funding

Pupils could help decide how £115m funding is spent in their local authority area. The funding is to be used at young people's discretion to improve things to do and places to go in their area.

The ring-fenced funding, delivered over two years from April 2006 through the Youth Opportunity Fund and the Youth Capital Fund, means 13- to 19-year-olds will have a central role as

grant-givers and decision-makers, as project leaders and grant-bidders and as beneficiaries of neighbourhood projects and facilities. Each local authority will provide details of how young people can participate in the funds.

The proposal for the funds is outlined in *Youth Matters: Next Steps*.

FOR MORE INFO: www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/youth

FOCUS ON...

The school profile

What is the school profile?

Following the passage of the Education Act 2005, governing bodies are no longer required to produce a governors' annual report. The report has now been replaced by the school profile, which can be completed by schools and published online. The requirement to publish a profile doesn't apply to maintained nursery schools, which are, for the time being,

still required to produce a governors' annual report.

The school profile contains: statistics, provided and updated by the DfES annually; a summary of the latest Ofsted report, provided by the DfES and updated at least every three years; and narrative sections written by the school and updated at least annually. These sections are limited to between 100 and 200 words each and include, for example, details of the school's achievements and extra-curricular activities.

Why has the profile been introduced?

The profile is intended to be a new and more effective way of conveying key information to all parents.

How does it work?

The first school profile will report on the

Images: Photofusion Picture Library/Alamy

Headteacher appraisal

With the roll out of School Improvement Partners (SIPs), there are changes to the arrangements for headteacher appraisals. SIPs will now take over the external advisers' role of providing external advice on headteacher performance management to governing bodies.

Because of the phasing of SIP rollout, some schools will not have a SIP for the next round of headteacher appraisal. The governing bodies of these schools will need to buy in appropriate external advice. Possible sources of external advice include education consultants, link advisers, former members of the inspectorate and, if the school has contact details, people who were employed by Cambridge Education (CE) as external advisers – the funding associated with the CE contract has been devolved into school budgets with



effect from 1 April 2006.

Where a school has been allocated a SIP, the SIP will, from that point, provide advice to the governing body on headteacher appraisal.

FOR MORE INFO:

■ www.governornet.co.uk/sip

■ www.governornet.co.uk/headteacherappraisal

Governors week on Teachers' TV



Teachers' TV is running Governors Week from 12-18 June. There'll be a host of programmes examining issues related to the governing role as well as educational issues that influence governors' work.

Highlights include the Just for Governors series, which runs all week, providing useful information, advice and discussion on topics as diverse as coping with a budget crisis and recruiting a new head; to tackling religious and racial tension and the consequences of playground injuries.


FOR MORE INFO: Teachers' TV is available on Sky 880, Telewest 240, ntl 803, HomeChoice 845 and Freeview 88 (12-6am). See programmes when they air on television or visit www.teachers.tv, where more than 1,000 programmes are available to watch or download for free.

academic year 2004/5. Schools should prepare text for each of the narrative sections. There is a prompt in each section, suggesting what it should contain. Links may also be made to other online information that the school may have, for example, details of the school's food and nutrition policy or after-school clubs. It is not necessary to fill in the school profile in one go. However, schools must ensure that all relevant areas of the profile have been completed before publishing. Once the profile has been submitted for online publication, it cannot be amended.

Who has to complete the new school profile?

It is the responsibility of the governing body of each maintained school in England to prepare and publish the school profile.

When does it have to be completed by?

Schools should have received their login details, enabling them to access their profile, which is stored in the password-protected part of the DfES TeacherNet site. Those schools that may not have a school username or password to hand, and that need to be reminded about the information, should send an email to that effect to: schoolprofile@dfes.gsi.gov.uk Schools should aim to complete and publish their profiles during the spring term. Once complete, it is made available online at the DfES ParentsCentre website <http://schoolprofile.parentscentre.gov.uk> Schools should inform parents when the profile is available online, and how to request alternative formats. 

FOR MORE INFO:

www.teachernet.gov.uk/schoolprofile

LEGISLATION

EMA is extended

Young people starting a Learning Skills Council (LSC)-funded 'Entry-to-Employment' programme or course that leads to an apprenticeship can now receive the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). This was previously only available to those in sixth form at school and further education colleges.

EMA aims to increase the financial support available to many low-income households, putting all young people on a more level playing field regardless of where they are undertaking their course.

Some low-income families will see their financial support increased to £90 per week compared to just £40 per week under the Minimum Training Allowance (MTA), which EMA will replace. Those who live away from their families, through no fault of their own, may qualify for Income Support, which can be combined with EMA to give £74.50 per week.

Governors are asked to ensure schools raise awareness of the scheme among pupils, especially those considering their post-16 options, so that they know that the range of courses covered by EMA has expanded.

FOR MORE INFO: Call the Local Partners, Schools and Colleges helpline on 0800 0562811 or visit www.direct.gov.uk/ema

Increased threshold for free school meals

As of April 2006, children whose parents receive the following support payments are entitled to free school meals:

- Income Support
- Income-Based Jobseekers Allowance
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Child Tax Credit, provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and their annual income doesn't exceed £14,155
- The guarantee element of State Pension Credit

FOR MORE INFO: www.governornet.co.uk/schoolmeals

Amendments to A Guide to the Law for School Governors

The 2006 edition of *A Guide to the Law for School Governors* has been distributed to all schools. The DfES is currently working on the first set of amendments to the guide, which will bring it up to date as of 1 April 2006.

FOR MORE INFO: Full details will be posted on Governornet at www.governornet.co.uk in May.

Teachers' pay

Teachers will receive a 2.5 per cent pay rise in September 2006, with a further increase of 2.5 per cent from September 2007, following the recommendations of the independent School Teachers' Review Body (STRB). This also applies to teaching and learning responsibility payments and special educational needs allowances.

The DfES is taking forward the STRB's recommendation for an independent study into the developing roles and responsibilities of the leadership group. Further work on issues relating to part-time and unattached teachers is also under way.

FOR MORE INFO: www.teachernet.gov.uk/pay



In safe hands

The new Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Bill is making it easier for schools to vet staff

Illustration: Dermot Flynn@www.dutchuncle.co.uk

The safety of children and the vetting of staff working in schools has been in the headlines over the last few months. The Government's new Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Bill, which will introduce the new vetting and barring scheme, should help allay public fears. Here, the DfES responds to questions on how the new scheme will work.

How will the new Vetting and Barring Scheme be different from the current vetting and barring processes?

The bill will create a single list of people barred from working closely with children, which will replace List 99 and the POCA (Protection of Children Act) list. Aligned with this will be a separate list of people barred from working closely with vulnerable adults. Where evidence suggests the individual presents a risk to both children and vulnerable adults they will be placed on both lists.

The bill will create a single list of people barred from working closely with children

A barring decision will be made on application to work with children or vulnerable adults on the basis of an individual's criminal history, as well as referrals from employers and other bodies.

An expert independent barring board, independent of ministers, will be established and given statutory responsibility for all discretionary barring decisions.

Barring decisions will be updated as soon as any new information becomes available. Employers will be notified, where possible, if an employee becomes barred.

All those employing individuals to work closely with children will be required to check barred status except where the employment occurs in the context of private family arrangements.

**What impact will they have on schools?
What checks will they need to do?**
If an individual frequently works in a school – either paid or unpaid – and has the



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opportunity for contact with children, then employers are required to check that the individual has gone through the central vetting process and is not barred. There will also be a requirement to check school governors.

Schools will be able to check barred status through an online check or through enhanced disclosure. The bill provides the power to require certain employers to seek a full disclosure.

Where a school receives staff from a supply agency, then it can rely on written confirmation from the agency that they have checked that the person has been centrally vetted and is not barred.

Where schools cease to use an individual for work with children because they have harmed a child or may harm a child – they must refer the relevant information to the scheme.

It will be an offence for the responsible individual(s) to not comply with these duties.

What about parents who help with school trips or come into school and help with reading – do they need to be vetted too?

Where parents frequently come into school and help with reading – for example, once a week, twice a month, or frequently help with school trips – they will need to be checked. However, where they come into the school on an occasional or one-off basis, the parent does not need to be checked. Checks for volunteers, as now, will be free.

When will the new scheme come into force?

The systems required to support the new Vetting and Barring Scheme will be in place by 2008.

Revised regulations will come into force in May 2006, which will make CRB checks mandatory for all newly appointed members of the school workforce, replacing existing guidance. If, in the interim period, an employer is concerned about the suitability of an individual to work with children, they can request that the individual apply for a CRB disclosure.

What is the governing body's role in safeguarding children?

The governing body has an important role to play in safeguarding children in schools, in particular, in ensuring that interviews to appoint staff reflect the importance of safeguarding children. The headteacher and one nominated governor from every school are able to access online training materials, commissioned by the DfES and produced by NCSL.

FOR MORE INFO:

■ www.ncsl.org.uk/managing_your_school/safer-recruitment

BEST LETTER

Dear Editor,

Part of the role of a governor is to be a 'critical friend' to the school. To do so, one needs to understand the issues and have a picture in one's head of best practice in modern education. Governor support literature and training days offer valuable help, but recently, I've discovered a rich vein of additional input from an unexpected source – digital television, in particular Teachers' TV and Parliament.

The first offers easily digested dramatisations and discussion of issues such as bullying, racism, admissions policy from the child's, parent's and teacher's perspectives plus, fly-on-the-wall documentaries of different methods of teaching, learning and managing behaviour being used in classrooms. The latter enabled me to watch the representatives of headteachers, educational support workers, governors' associations and others, giving their professional opinions and input to the Parliamentary Select Committee on last autumn's White Paper on schools.

I had not expected television to be of such use in keeping me up to date and informed on new initiatives and ideas in education.

Gillian Newton governor

Turn to p5 for programme information on Governors week on Teachers' TV.

Dear Editor

The Schools White Paper enthuses about the role of the governors and the extra responsibilities they will enjoy under the Trust school system.

However, I wonder how many governors will be prepared to enter this legal minefield. Under the current community school system, the governors are covered legally and financially by the local authority in the event of their making a serious mistake (ie. an improper staff dismissal) provided they acted 'in good faith'. What happens when the buck stops with the governors?

Further, do most governors want to be responsible for running a 'school business', with powers to buy and sell property.

I think it is fair to say that many governing

bodies, if not most, do not understand in any detail their present powers, and certainly do not exercise them with any vigour. Polite rubber-stamping of the head's proposals is the usual approach.

The vision of governing bodies in the White Paper is dangerously idealistic and will prove to be the great stumbling block to the Trust school proposals.

Douglas Kedge, governor

Dear Editor,

Even though I am a new governor I immediately spotted the problem with the item on allowances in the spring term issue. If the DfES is serious that governors should not be out of pocket, then it should fund them centrally. I do not know a single governor, let alone a majority of a board who would place paying their petrol money above any of the issues directly affecting their school when deciding how to spend their school's budget.

The only surprise to me is that 10 per cent do have enough funding available to meet this lowest priority expense.

David Talbot, governor

TO READ MORE LETTERS, VISIT: www.governornet.co.uk/governorsletters

Winners of the Guide to the Law receipt competition:
 Cotford St Luke Community Primary School in Taunton won SMART Technologies' interactive whiteboard
 • Haworth C of E Primary School in Leeds won Day/Dream Education's interactive resources
 • Hardwick Primary School in Bury St Edmunds won Creative Classroom Assessment with eSAAMS from Counterpoint
 • Gateacre Community Comprehensive School in Liverpool won UniServy's Connected Learning Community

WIN!

The best letter in the spring term's issue will win the complete SEMERC Track series – CD-ROMs and workbooks that provide practical support for pupils studying literacy in the inclusive classroom. The series covers spelling, memorisation, the alphabet, visual perception, idioms, phonemes, and reading and writing skills. All titles meet SENDA requirements.

FOR MORE INFO: www.semerc.com

SEMERC

On the ball

Councillor Brian Rigby, Chair of Governors at Ashton-on-Mersey School, was awarded an MBE in the New Year Honours list

Why did you become a school governor?

When I retired, a local councillor recommended me for governorship. I have always had an interest in sports, so Ashton-on-Mersey School, which had a history of sporting achievement, was perfect. I was a governor in 1990; and within a year I was chairman of the board.

What is the most rewarding aspect of being a governor?

For me, it is seeing the children succeed. My aim is for the school to remain somewhere where children want to learn, teachers want to teach and where parents want to send their children.

The school has a successful partnership with Manchester United FC. How did this come about?

Yes, we have a wonderful partnership, not only in a sporting capacity but also in an academic one. We were seeking sponsorship for our Specialist Status as a Sports College at the same time as Manchester United was looking for a school to send boys to from its youth teams. We have a Manchester United representative on the governing body working for whole school improvement and organising education for the apprentices.


Your school and another have formed a federation. Why did you opt for a federation and has it been a success?

We have entered into a federation with another local high school, Broadoak. We felt problems could be addressed by bringing together good practices from both schools, hopefully bringing additional opportunities for children. We have already revised the curriculum, introduced firm but fair discipline to improve learning and implemented a new school uniform to give pupils a sense of identity.

Why were you awarded an MBE?

I believe it is for my contribution to education in Trafford. I sit on the Foundation and Aided Schools National Association (FASNA) as well various education committees. The award raised a few tears in the Rigby house, I can tell you!

What would you say to anyone thinking about becoming a school governor?

The person should have great commitment and vision, and must care for the community to consider school governorship. It is important for governors to know there is a difference between skills for managership and those required for governorship. 

“A GOVERNOR SHOULD HAVE GREAT COMMITMENT AND VISION, AND MUST CARE FOR THE COMMUNITY”

Interview: Dominic Murray Picture: Paul McDonald

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