

Governors

Termly newsletter

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Awards recognise governors

Governor award is warmly welcomed

For the first time ever, school governors have been recognised through a national award.

The 2006 Teaching Awards ceremony was held on the 15 October 2006 at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane. The event was hosted by the BBC's Jeremy Vine, and was shown on BBC2.

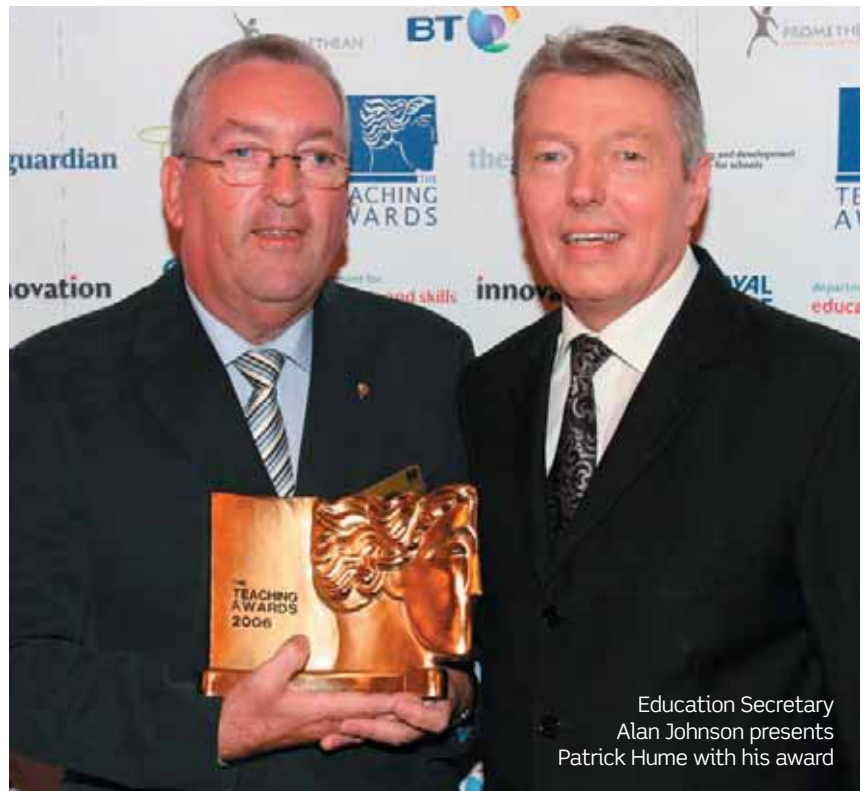
All of the 144 regional winners, of which 14 were school governors, attended the winners' weekend at the Tower Hotel, which included a finalists' seminar, the awards ceremony, and a gala dinner at the hotel.

The new category for governors has been

warmly welcomed. "I think it's very important to have a governor category in the Teaching Awards. It can only enhance the awards. It's great that this type of voluntary work is being recognised – governors' work is valuable, and often goes unrecognised," says Patrick Hume, chair of governors at St Cecilia's College in Derry, and winner of the 2006 Governors' Award.

The 2006 Governors' Award received 673 nominations – the highest number for any category.

FOR MORE INFO: To nominate school governors for the 2007 awards, visit www.teachingawards.com See page 8 for an interview with Patrick Hume.



Education Secretary Alan Johnson presents Patrick Hume with his award

Helping children in care

School governors can make a powerful contribution in helping schools to break the cycle of disadvantage often associated with looked after children.

On 9 October, the Government published its green paper *Care Matters*. This sets out a comprehensive set of proposals to transform the lives of children and young people in care. The majority of children come into care as a result of abuse or neglect and, as their corporate parent, the State cannot and must not accept any less for them than we would for our own children.

While some children in care do well in their

education, as a group they under perform significantly in relation to their peers, with only 11 per cent achieving five good GCSEs in 2005, compared to 56 per cent of their peers. Governors, working with their headteachers, learning support staff and designated teachers, must help change this by helping to put in place policies that ensure that children in care are given the support they need to make their educational experience positive, and to help them flourish.

FOR MORE INFO: *Care Matters* is available online at www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications

WIN your school SEMERC software!

Just tell us what you think

Governors has teamed up with SEMERC to give school governors the chance to win Think About! 1, which helps support memory recall.

This CD-ROM and photocopiable workbook will be awarded to the best letter sent to us for use in the summer term issue of *Governors*.

We value your feedback, top tips and responses to articles. For a chance to win the software, turn to page 7.

MEASURING OUTPUT

The UK Centre for the Measurement of Government Activity (UKCeMGA), a division of the Office for National Statistics is looking for governors, administrators, parents and teachers to participate in its consultation on how the output and quality of education should be measured. The consultation ends on 21 February.

FOR MORE INFO:
To take part in the consultation, visit www.statistics.gov.uk/ukcemga

SEN RESPONSE

The Government has published its response to the Education and Skills Select Committee's inquiry and report on special educational needs (SEN), in which it has rejected the Select Committee's call for "a completely fresh look at SEN". The Government reaffirmed its commitment to the long-term action to improve provision for children with SEN as set out in its 2004 strategy *Removing Barriers to Achievement*, and has asked HMCI to review progress in 2009/10.

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

OFSTED REPORT

Ofsted's 2005-06 annual report can be viewed online. The report presents a national picture of education and childcare in England, based on the evidence of around 40,000 inspection visits. Also available is the 2005/06 list of outstanding providers, childminders, nurseries, schools and colleges.

FOR MORE INFO: www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/annualreport0506

All change for coursework



Sweeping changes to the GCSE coursework system have been announced. The changes are a response to widespread concerns about the reliability of coursework.

As of September 2007, there will be no coursework for GCSE maths. Further changes to GCSE maths as a whole will be made in 2010, once the role and assessment of functional skills becomes clearer.

For other subjects, from September 2009, existing coursework tasks and assessments will be replaced by controlled assessments, the detail of which is still under consultation. However, the guiding principle of the new coursework assessments is that unsupervised coursework assessments should no longer contribute towards final GCSE grades. This means that students might carry out research and investigation outside the classroom, but the actual essay would be written under controlled supervised conditions.

FOR MORE INFO: www.qca.org.uk/2586_17443.html

Heads to be given powers to search for weapons

Although incidents involving knives and other weapons in schools are rare, under the Violent Crime Reduction Bill, headteachers are to be given powers to search pupils if they suspect them of carrying a weapon.

Guidance will be provided to schools on screening all their pupils for weapons, using technology such as airport-style walk-through metal-detecting arches or handheld metal-detecting 'wands'.

Screening can be carried out on all pupils, without their consent and without suspicion that a weapon might be found, provided it is carried out in a way that respects pupils' privacy. If screening indicates a weapon may be present, school staff could then use the new power included in the Violent Crime Reduction Bill (VCRB) to carry out a hands-on search.

FOR MORE INFO: www.dfes.gov.uk/schoolsecurity



Getting out and about

On 28 November 2006, the Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto was launched. This sets out a vision to enable every young person to experience the world beyond the classroom as an essential part of their learning and personal development. Learning outside the classroom is about raising achievement through an organised, powerful approach to learning in which direct experience is of prime importance. It can include experiences ranging from using the school grounds or visiting a local museum to cultural exchanges abroad.

The Manifesto brings together a coalition of organisations to support schools and others in providing these valuable opportunities, and acts as



a statement of common intent that will make better use of our individual and collective resources. It can involve everyone who sees the benefits to young people, such as school staff and governors, parents, local authorities, government, community and voluntary organisations, curriculum subject bodies, businesses and all those agencies that

provide external support to schools. Those who support the vision are invited to endorse the manifesto and pledge their support by making public the actions they intend to make.

FOR MORE INFO: To find out more about the Manifesto and how your school can become involved, please visit www.teachernet.gov.uk/learningoutsidetheclassroom

Frances Acton is one of three advisers at Governorline

More capital investment announced for education

In his pre-budget speech in December 2006, Chancellor Gordon Brown confirmed a £36 billion investment programme, over the next four years, in the refurbishment and rebuilding of England's schools and colleges. This will ensure, he said, that "all 21,000 schools are fit for the 21st century".

Capital investment in education will rise to £10.2 billion in 2010/11, including additional investment of £250 million, £750 million and £1,850 million over the years 2008/09 to 2010/11.

There will also be a £130 million increase in direct

payments to support personalised teaching and extended services, as well as a promise to increase the Bookstart scheme, which gives free books to primary children, and the Every Child a Reader programme. This provides special catch-up tuition to children falling behind at the age of six.

Direct payments to schools in England will rise to an average of £200 per pupil for primary schools and £225 per pupil for secondary schools.

For more info: www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/pre_budget_report

Consultation on three-year budgets

The Government is proposing some key changes to the way the funding arrangements work, ready for the move to three-year school budgets from April 2008. These will cover issues such as the Minimum Funding Guarantee, and how schools and local authorities are funded for deprivation. Consultation on these proposals will be launched in February, but ministers have already decided not to proceed with academic year budgets for schools, as schools must continue to account on a financial-year basis.

FOR MORE INFO: Look out in February for details of the consultation on the schoolfunding pages of TeacherNet at www.teachernet.gov.uk/schoolfunding

The new EU Lifelong Learning Programme

The EU will be launching its Lifelong Learning Programme from January 2007. This will give learners a host of opportunities to develop their skills by working together with their European peers.

The programme brings together four already existing programmes, including Comenius, which provides funding for schools across Europe to work together on projects either related to languages or another area of the curriculum. There are also



opportunities for pupils and staff to take part in exchanges and for teachers to develop their teaching and management skills.

FOR MORE INFO: www.lifelonglearningprogramme.org.uk

Words: Sara Grossman Picture: Rogan McDonald



Advice at your fingertips

You've got three new governors on your governing body who need guidance on what they should be doing, the school needs to dismiss a member of staff and you don't know where the school stands legally, and there is ongoing conflict between the chair of governors and the headteacher. Where do you turn?

Governorline is a free service for governors, providing advice and support. The Governorline team comprises three advisers – John Haines, Cliff Baldry and Frances Acton, who recently joined the team in June 2006. All three are experienced school governors, and can deal with most of the

questions thrown at them. "It's easy to advise other governors because I'm talking about what I know. A lot of the issues are the same, regardless of the school or the governor," says Frances, who has been a governor for 10 years, and chair for four. "Sometimes, it's about pointing them in the right direction; other times, people merely want someone to bounce ideas off and to explore the options. And if I don't know the answer, we have on hand teams of legal advisers, and health and safety experts. Governorline is good because it's objective and sympathetic, and can offer support."

Governorline receives around 8,000 calls per year, and 80-90 emails per month. Calls come mainly from the chair of governors, although new governors often ring, wanting advice on what they should be doing.

The most common calls received relate to the roles and responsibilities of governors and conflict issues, but

Governorline also receives calls in respect of employment legislation and health and safety. Below, Frances Acton answers a couple of common questions that Governorline receives:

I am a new parent governor. I've been told by the chair that I cannot bring parents' day-to-day issues to the governing body.

Day-to-day issues should be handled by the head and the staff. However, on the strategic issues where parents' views should be taken into account by the governing body, it would be

desirable for a parent governor to share parental views and to facilitate consultation with the parent body.

"GOVERNORLINE IS OBJECTIVE AND SYMPATHETIC" FRANCES ACTON

Our recent Key Stage test results are very disappointing and governors are asking what can be done to improve them. The head insists that everything is under control, and there is no need for any governor involvement. What should we do?

Governors are entitled to ask for any relevant performance data such as the school PANDA and RAISEONLINE report etc. They should then work with the leadership team to identify areas requiring improvement and to develop strategies to effect this improvement. The governing body should be involved in the ongoing monitoring of progress towards these identified outcomes, in conjunction with the leadership team, until the targets are met. **G**

FOR MORE INFO:

Visit www.governorline.info or call on 08000 722181

RESOURCES

Year planner

An updated version of the Year Planner is now available for download from Governonet. The planner contains tasks, categorised by the term they relate to. To get the most out of the planner, users who are logged in and registered (free) can personalise the planner to suit their needs.

FOR MORE INFO: www.governonet.co.uk (click on Year Planner)

Procuring school lunches

New guidance is available to headteachers and governors to help them meet the new food-based standards (see pages 6-7 of the autumn term 2006 issue for more details on the standards).

Procuring School Lunches sets out some of the key issues that need to be considered when reviewing the school's current meal service. It looks at options available to schools, including contracting the service out to a different provider, improving the service provided by the existing contractor or bringing the service in-house and managing it entirely within the school.

Separate guidance is also available on reviewing current contracts and making variations to them. FOR MORE INFO: www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/healthyliving/foodanddrink/procuringmeals

Designing school grounds

Governing bodies can get practical advice on how best to use their school grounds for the educational, recreational and social needs of their pupils. The guide – *Schools for the Future: Designing School Grounds* – is particularly relevant to people who make decisions about capital and revenue spending, and who want to increase the educational opportunities offered by schools, or are involved in designing school sites.

FOR MORE INFO: www.tsoshop.co.uk/education/bookstore.asp

Filling governor vacancies

Many governing bodies find it hard to fill all their vacancies, which is where School Governors' One-Stop Shop (SGOSS) comes in. This small, limited company with charitable status aims to recruit volunteers with transferable skills to become governors and add value in schools across England. SGOSS works with private, voluntary and public organisations on schemes to encourage staff to become school governors. Its services are free to individuals, schools and employers.

FOR MORE INFO: www.sgoos.org.uk, tel: 0870 241 3883

WEBSITES

■ www.governonet.co.uk

Useful information for all school governors

■ www.nga.org.uk

National Governors' Association (NGA)

Tel: 0121 643 5787

■ www.governors.fsnet.co.uk

Information for School and College Governors (ISCG)

Tel: 020 7229 0200

■ www.sgoos.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

How to recruit headteachers

School governors can play a crucial role in safeguarding the future of leadership in schools by taking a more systematic approach to the recruitment and appointment of heads.

Governors should think of the recruitment process as part of longer-term planning that ensures their schools always have the best leadership – such as finding ways of speeding up the career development of staff.

The National College for



expectations of a new head solely on what has worked in the school in the past; and assess their leadership needs in the light of their school's goals, environment and capabilities of the current leadership team.

NCSL has produced a guide – *Recruiting*

Headteachers and Senior Leaders: Step Up to the Challenge – to help school governors with the process.

FOR MORE INFO: www.ncsl.org.uk/publications/publications-r.cfm

School Leadership (NCSL) undertook a research project on headteacher recruitment and appointment. It found that governors need to underpin the process with some key checks: do not base

Reducing bureaucracy in schools

IRU members, who are professional staff in schools, have made it clear that, given the current economic and social context, they see little likelihood of any reduction in the expectations placed on schools to cut unnecessary bureaucracy.

To manage those expectations, get the best outcomes for all pupils and secure a work/life balance for people working in schools, they say:

■ the DfES needs to work harder to make the promised new relationship with schools a reality

■ it needs to exert greater influence over local authorities, national agencies, regional offices of government, and other government departments to limit the burdens they place on schools

■ schools must play a large part in reducing bureaucracy and burdens by being more assertive about the initiatives they adopt, and firmer in rejecting those that do not meet the needs of their pupils.

FOR MORE INFO: www.teachernet.gov.uk/irustatement2006



Performance Management

What is performance management?

Performance management is the process of assessing teachers' and headteachers' overall performance and planning their future development.

What changes have been made to the performance management regulations?

The changes streamline the process of planning and assessment so teachers and heads understand what is expected of them. They also create clearer links between performance management and school improvement and pay.

In particular:

■ The governing body must annually review the schools' performance management policy, consulting staff and recognised trade unions where revisions are necessary

■ Where allocated, School Improvement Partners (SIPs) will undertake the role of the external adviser to the governing body during the headteacher's review. Schools without a SIP must appoint their own external adviser

■ The governing body must have

Risk management in schools

Governors will know that being aware of risks and managing them appropriately is the key to good business and resource management in school. To help schools manage their risks more effectively, the DFES is working with local authorities and insurers with the aim of reducing the number of incidents that occur in schools to property and people.

Incidents, such as theft, vandalism and fire, can cause major disruption. Good risk management significantly reduces the chances of such incidents

Under the new risk management strategy, which is already being piloted, schools will get help in identifying the risks. The strategy also includes the development of a diagnostic risk ranking tool that will allow authorities to assess levels of risk in their schools. Using risk ranking data, authorities can



work towards implementing weighted or discounted premiums as a financial incentive for schools to manage their risks.

FOR MORE INFO: www.dfes.gov.uk/vfm

LEGISLATION

Governing bodies can acquire a Trust

In November, the Education and Inspections Bill 2006 was enacted. This May, a key part of the Act will come into force – the provision for schools' governing bodies to acquire a 'Trust' made up of external partners that they feel will help to raise standards and create more opportunities for their pupils. Schools will be able to choose whether the Trust has a majority or minority representation on governing bodies, and will be protected by safeguards in the Act that prevent unsuitable organisations from becoming involved in schools.

While remaining part of the local authority family of schools, Trust schools will have a number of flexibilities including owning their own assets, employing their own staff, and setting their own admission arrangements (in accordance with the Admissions Code).

FOR MORE INFO: <http://trustschools.ssatrust.org.uk>

Disability Equality Act guidance

The Disability Equality Duty for the public sector came into force in December 2006. Under the new duty, schools must produce a Disability Equality Scheme. Secondary schools should have already completed theirs (4 December 2006), but primary schools have until 3 December 2007 to do theirs, as do primary and secondary special schools.

The duty will require primary and secondary schools to carry out their functions with due regard to the need to:

- promote equality of opportunity for disabled people
- eliminate unlawful discrimination and disability-related harassment
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage their participation in public life
- take steps to take into account people's disabilities, even where that involves more favourable treatment

FOR MORE INFO: Guidance for schools is available at www.dotheduty.org

Improving performance expectations

The DFES has issued guidance to support LAs and schools in setting targets for 2008 that aim to improve performance expectations across all Key Stages. This follows evidence from the targets set for 2007 by a majority of primary schools, where more than 50 per cent set targets indicating that they did not expect to raise standards in English beyond the level achieved in 2005.

Schools are responsible for setting their own targets and the governing body has a legal duty to agree and report the targets to the local authority. The DFES expects them to do so by looking at the prior attainment of pupils and setting a target that reflects the best possible ambition for what each pupil can achieve. Where a school is setting a target that means pupils will not make the progress needed to achieve the expected level for their age, the local authority's role (and for secondary schools, the School Improvement Partner's role) is to challenge the school's assumptions and determine how the school can be helped to raise expectations.

FOR MORE INFO: www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ts

International trends study

More than 300 schools across England are being invited to participate in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) next summer.

TIMSS is a survey of Year 5 and Year 9, comparing pupil achievement in mathematics and science. The National Foundation for



Educational Research (NFER) is carrying out the survey in England on behalf of DFES.

If your school has been drawn in the sample, the DFES hopes that you will agree to represent England in the study, which will help add an international dimension to teaching and learning.

FOR MORE INFO: www.nfer.ac.uk/TIMSS

regard to the work/life balance of the headteacher when drafting their planning and review statement.

When do these come into effect?

The first plans under the revised arrangements need to be completed by 31 October 2007 (teachers) and 31 December 2007 (heads).

What implications do these changes have to governors?

The role of governors will not be significantly different. There are, for example, few changes to the way governing bodies conduct headteacher performance management or the way pay decisions are made. The revised regulations build on existing requirements to provide clearer, fairer and more consistent arrangements more closely

integrated into schools and LA processes.

What kind of training and resources will be available to governors?

The Training and Development Agency (TDA) is working closely with both the National Coordinators of Governor Services (NCOGS) and the National Governors' Association (NGA). The TDA has played an active role in many of NCOGS and NGA's recent national and regional events and will continue to do so during the coming months. The TDA is currently running a whole series of workshops to enable local authorities to introduce the new arrangements to schools.

FOR MORE INFO:

There is guidance for schools at: www.teachernet.gov.uk/performancemanagement



Going green

How to make your school more sustainable

Words: Katy Ward Illustration: Mark Blade

The Government's multi-billion pound investment in primary and secondary school buildings, means there has never been a better time for governors to work with parents and teachers to reduce pollution and cut utility bills.

Below is a selection of tips from The DfES's National Framework on Sustainable Schools, which highlights eight 'doorways' to sustainability.

Energy and water

Governors can help cut carbon emissions by studying their school's energy and water usage and pinpointing areas of wastage – inefficient appliances, devices left on, unnecessary heating, poor insulation, even water leaks. They can also investigate alternative sources and suppliers of energy. Manshead Upper School in Luton, for example, has installed a wind turbine, which the school estimates will save more than £2,000 in

utility bills a year (the turbine cost £22,000).

Governors are in an ideal position to approach organisations that offer funding for renewable energy or apply to the council for planning permission.

Purchase and waste

Many schools have a recycling policy. Tickenham Primary in North Somerset recycle everything from shredded documents to print cartridges. The school was awarded an eco-bronze award for its efforts in recycling. SEN governor Caroline Eastwood found out about the award and coordinated the application. She chairs a termly eco-school meeting and compiles a folder on eco-policy for the governing body.

Local wellbeing

A strong sustainable school policy reaches out to the local community. "The eco action team have been responsible for making the children think more about the environment, not just for the school, but for the community," says Sue Gascoine, parent governor at St James' CE Primary School in Bermondsey, London.

The school produced a float for a local carnival inspired by sustainability themes. Sue also attends eco-action meetings and organises litter picks and planting the school's produce.

Travel and traffic

By 2020, the Government would like students to either walk or cycle to school. The Holgate School in Hucknall, Nottinghamshire, already has a travel plan in place. Traffic calming measures, road markings and fences on

CASE STUDY – COBOURG PRIMARY

When Cobourg Primary in south-east London came out of special measures this year, sustainability was top of the agenda.

The main focus of the eco-policy has been the School Orchard Project. The school designated an area for the orchard, where pupils grow apples, pears and cherries. "It's very exciting to be involved in something that will have benefits for 15 or 20 years," says LEA governor Chris Wilson


"The governing body supported and approved the project from the start," says Chris. Originally Walworth City Farm approached the school with the idea for the orchard. One of the parent governors was a keen gardener and made sure the governing body championed the orchard.

The school received a grant of £500 from the London Schools Environment Award toward the cost of the orchard. But sustainability has not been a financial drain. "You don't have to spend huge amounts of money to be sustainable," Chris adds.

junctions make walking to school safer.

The governing body worked with its county council on the travel plan, and attended a public meeting to keep parents informed. Funding came from local road safety organisations and was matched with money from the school budget to build a cycle compound on site.

Buildings and grounds

Eco-friendly schools regard their grounds as living, learning environments and follow sustainable design principles. Governors could look at using the school grounds to foster positive attitudes towards the environment, play and behaviour. 

FOR MORE INFO:

- www.teachernet.gov.uk/sustainableschools
- www.eco-schools.org.uk
- www.lowcarbonbuildings.org.uk – help on how to obtain funding for microgeneration technologies, such as wind turbines
- Guidance for governors on sustainability will be available in the spring on www.teachernet.gov.uk/sustainableschools

Tips for saving energy and water:

- Upgrade heating controls
- Use energy-efficient lighting.
- Install smart metering
- Install a water conservation device
- Insulate hot water pipes
- Draught strip windows and doors
- Check for water leaks
- Use renewable energy, which cut pollution and save money
- Understand your bill

FEEDBACK



Got something to say? Email governors@governorsnewsletter.co.uk or write to the editor at *Governors*, John Brown, 136-142 Bramley Road, London W10 6SR

BEST LETTER

Dear Editor,

I was horrified to read that once again literacy and maths are having a revamp. I cannot see any advantage to be gained by all nine-year-olds knowing their tables, it will just put unnecessary stress on teachers to achieve this impossible target. Yes, the top cohort of students will achieve this easily, but I worry about the middle and lower tiers of students who will be put under undue stress to reach this target.

The problem lies not with the rote learning of tables, which, for a large percentage of nine-year-olds, will be relatively meaningless, but with the understanding of the basic mathematical concepts. These concepts are not fully embedded due to a number of factors: lack of repetition, time, and quality of teaching. Students move from year to year with vague recollections of mathematical concepts.

As a governor and a maths teacher, I urge all governors to take a close look at how maths is being taught at their schools. Are students spending long enough learning and understanding the basic concepts? Are they doing maths daily? Does the maths homework reinforce the learning?

Breda Kidd, parent governor

DfES Response: The objective you are referring to states that children learn to derive and recall multiplication facts to 10x10. The aim is that in Year 4, children's understanding is secured, and by Year 5, they are ready to recall these facts quickly and accurately and use the knowledge to solve problems. The strategy recommends a daily mathematics lesson for all primary school children and provides guidance on homework. Most schools set homework in Key Stage 2.

Dear Editor

Your last issue indicated that, as from September, LEAs will start to use Choice Advisers, and that they will receive £15,000 per year over two years, topped up where appropriate to fund them, and

the money will be ring-fenced. The fact is that even if some parents were unable to make sound choices were they available (and most if not all could), it is useless identifying the schools if their doors are closed through over-subscription and they cannot be accessed, while those offered are of lower standard. Help in making the right choice should not be offered until the choice is actually an option. Jim Knight should direct the available funds to achieving that end first.

Cyril Ford, governor

Dear Editor,

Having just read the article Food for Thought in the Autumn term edition of *Governors*, I am very happy to report that the school at which I am governor has recently fully complied with the new food standards.

I am alarmed to report, however, that many of the children who qualify for free school meals are not eating the new healthy meals! It appears that the idea of a tasty, healthy meal every day does not whet the appetite of those receiving it for free!!

If anyone else has a similar experience and ideas for a solution, I would be happy to hear their thoughts.

Name and address withheld

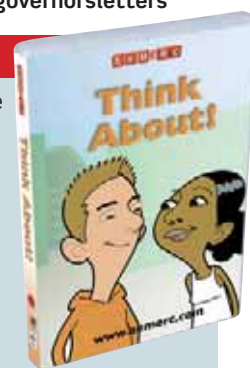
Please send responses to governors@governorsnewsletter.co.uk

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

WIN!

The best letter in the summer term's issue will win SEMERC's Think About! 1 CD-ROM and accompanying workbook. Think About! 1 is designed to stimulate discussion and develop language, communication and memory skills with students aged seven and above, including those with specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia and autistic spectrum disorders. The animations also make it appealing for older and more reluctant learners.

FOR MORE INFO: www.semerc.com



Governors

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“I NEVER DREAMT THAT WHEN THE VICE PRINCIPAL ASKED IF SHE COULD NOMINATE ME FOR THE AWARDS, I WOULD END UP WINNING”

A winning combination

Patrick Hume won the Teaching Award’s first ever Governor Award, for the work he’s done at St Cecilia’s College in Derry

governing body spent a couple of days visiting some of the performing arts schools in London.

Why did you become a school governor?

I became a governor at St Cecilia’s College in Derry 14 years ago. I had four daughters who went there, and I wanted to give something back. For the last five years, I’ve been chair. In October, our school was awarded specialist status as a performing arts school.

How did you feel when you won Governor of the Year at the Teaching Awards?

I was over the moon. I felt humbled, but proud for the school and our community. I never dreamt that, when the vice principal asked if she could nominate me for the awards, I would end up winning.

What is the most challenging thing you’ve done in your role as a governor?


Most of the roles I do are quite challenging, but for me, the hardest thing is appointing good staff – it’s so easy to get it wrong, but it’s really rewarding when you get it right. Also getting specialist status was a challenge, mainly because we had to feel our way as we went along – we are one of the first schools in Northern Ireland to achieve specialist status. The head and I went to a conference in Birmingham on becoming a specialist school, which was really helpful and allowed us to do a fare bit of networking. In fact, our school has formed firm friendships with some of these schools, which helps with the learning process.

Why do you think you won?

I must have had the qualities that the judges were looking for. I’m a caring person who is interested in education and committed to the community. Our governing body works well as a team – we have helped increase the school’s roll (it used to be undersubscribed, but is now oversubscribed) and formed links with the community.

When we visited London for the Teaching Awards in October last year, several of our

What is the best thing about being a school governor?

Because I’m retired (I worked in the healthcare industry for 45 years), I get to spend a lot of time in the school, which is great. The other day I brought my award into the school and was interviewed by a group of the children who were looking at news reporting for their GCSE. They asked some really good questions. 

Interview: Sara Grossman Picture: Rogan McDonald



GovernorNet is the one-stop website for school governors. It provides up-to-date information about all aspects of school governance www.governornet.co.uk

What’s new on GovernorNet

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