

Five-year plan gives schools more freedom

Governors and headteachers are to get more financial security and freedom, according to the Department for Education and Skills' new five-year strategy.

The strategy, which was announced by secretary of state for education and skills Charles Clarke in July, includes:

- **Guaranteed three-year budgets** for every school from 2006, geared to pupil numbers, with every school guaranteed a minimum per pupil increase each year. In each local authority a dedicated Schools Budget, the amount spent locally on schools and other services for pupils, such as special needs – will be funded by national government with a 100 per cent direct grant. Local authorities will not be able to divert the funds to any other purpose.

- **School budget year.** The government plans to move the school budget year to run in line with the academic year, not the financial year, something which

governors and heads had specifically asked for.

Taken together the new funding arrangements will give headteachers and governors the ability to plan ahead with a much greater degree of certainty and confidence.

- **Foundation schools.** All secondary schools will now have the freedom, through becoming foundation schools, to own their land and buildings, manage their assets, employ their staff and forge partnerships with outside sponsors and educational foundations. Foundation schools with a foundation will now be able to have a majority of foundation governors. Secondary schools will also be able to have additional sponsor governors. This means that schools will be able to build long term partnerships with external sponsors, including businesses, charities and faith sponsors. All schools, except those which are failing, will have a right to take these powers by a vote of their



governing body, following a brief period of consultation.

- **Specialist schools.** Every secondary school should become a specialist school (except those that are failing or due to become an academy), building centres of curriculum excellence and driving wider improvements.

In addition, opportunities to develop a second specialism or become a training school will be offered to some schools when they seek re-designation as a specialist school.

- **More school places.** There will be more places available at popular schools through the announcement of additional government funding to help successful schools expand.

- **Reduction in bureaucracy.** Plans to cut red tape were also announced. These plans, which will be delivered through the Department's New Relationship with Schools, include shorter and more frequent inspections with less advanced notice, a greater emphasis on school self-evaluation, simplified ► **P2**



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data systems and a published school profile which will give parents up-to-date information on a school's performance and strategic direction in a clear format (see page 3).

- **Single Standards Grant.** The current direct payments to schools for standards-related activities will be combined into a single Standards Grant, further reducing red tape.

- **More academies.** Two hundred new academies will open for business, or be in the pipeline, by 2010 and every secondary school will be refurbished or rebuilt over the next 10 to 15 years.

- **Foundation Partnerships.** Schools will also be able to work together in new 'Foundation Partnerships' to raise standards and provide improved or new services.

- **Key role for governors.** Governors and governing bodies will be key in delivering many of the reforms and plans in the strategy.

To help governors, the Department is producing a document that sets out the agenda for schools from a governance perspective. Called *Governing the School of the Future*, it looks at how the Department can build on governing bodies' achievements to help governors face the challenges of the future.

The document specifically discusses governors' roles in the context of the New Relationship with Schools and the Every Child Matters agendas. *Governing the School of the Future* also sets out what the Department will do to support governors in these challenges. The document will be available later this term at www.governornet.co.uk/schoolofthefuture. Hard copies can be ordered from Prolog on 0845 6022260. The Department will be developing a new mentoring programme for chairs to strengthen governing body leadership capacity and supplement the *Taking the Chair* programme (see page 7). For further information on the strategy, visit www.governornet.co.uk/5yearstrategy

Annual Parents' Meetings – more choice for governors

Ministers have announced their intention to legislate to remove the requirement on schools to hold an Annual Parents' Meeting (APM).

APMs were introduced to ensure that governing bodies were accountable to parents and to give parents an opportunity to have their say on issues that concerned them. However, meetings were usually very poorly attended with many schools frequently reporting that only a handful of parents turned up.

Despite reducing bureaucracy by removing the regulation of the form and content of meetings and allowing exemptions in certain circumstances, the DfES is aware that it has still been difficult for many schools to generate enthusiasm for APMs.



In the consultation on the exemption regulations, there was significant support for removing the requirement to hold APMs altogether.

Governors will be better able to manage their communication with parents who will still receive information about their children's schools through the proposed School Profile which will give them broader and more meaningful information on the school than currently available. www.governornet.co.uk/apms

New assessments for seven year-olds

Almost 5,000 schools have taken part in a trial of new assessment arrangements for seven year-olds.

All local education authorities were invited to volunteer to take part in the Key Stage 1 trial if their schools were willing to do so. Thirty-four LEAs were selected to participate in the trial – a nationally representative sample based on historical attainment and geographical coverage.

The new approach placed more emphasis on a teacher's

judgement of a child's progress and gave teachers greater flexibility in administering the tasks and tests and more choice of which tasks and tests to use.

Children still had to take tests or tasks in reading, writing and maths but the marks from those tests and tasks were not published. Instead teachers used the marks, alongside judgements made about the rest of children's work in class, to make one assessment of a

child's progress in each subject. That assessment was reported to parents and LEAs, although parents were able to receive individual test and task results on request from the school. Following the publication of the full independent evaluation report, which is due in September, the government will decide whether to extend the new arrangements nationally in 2005.

www.qca.org.uk/ages3-14 or www.teachernet.gov.uk/ks1trial

Healthy Living blueprint launched



The DfES is launching a new Healthy Living website to help schools develop a whole school approach to healthy living.

The website will provide schools with a 'blueprint' of all the available programmes and initiatives currently available, including the National Healthy Schools Programme, School Sport Co-ordinator Partnerships and the Food in Schools Programme, plus information on how to embed healthy living into the curriculum.

For more information visit www.teachernet.gov.uk/healthyliving

Ten year investment framework for science and innovation

The government has launched a ten year investment framework for science and innovation.

Science is crucial to the British economy but there are increasing concerns about the future supply of scientists that will continue Britain's track record in producing some of the best science in the world.

The framework recognises that schools have an important role to play in increasing the numbers of young people choosing to study science subjects post-16 and ensuring all young people understand the importance and relevance of science to the world around them.

A particular focus of the framework is science

teaching. This includes making additional incentives available to get more top-quality graduates to train to be science teachers, recruiting more specialised support staff and ensuring all science teachers have access to excellent continuing professional development opportunities.

www.governornet.co.uk/scienceandinnovation



Education Photos

New Relationship with Schools – the way forward

The DfES is working closely with the teaching profession to further develop its proposals for the New Relationship with Schools (NRwS).

The aim of the new relationship is to help schools improve by reducing bureaucracy and making it easier for them to access support without being subject to duplicative bidding, planning and accountability requirements. A simplified school improvement process and a more intelligent accountability framework will be lighter touch and less burdensome without compromising on rigour.

In June, the DfES and Ofsted jointly published *A New Relationship with Schools* which outlines the way forward for Ofsted's new inspection proposals and summarises the key aspects of the new relationship. The document is available at www.teachernet.gov.uk/newrelationship

The New Relationship with Schools is being trialled in eight LEAs. The trials start this month and will test various aspects of the new relationship throughout the coming academic year.

The results will help the Department develop and refine the NRwS proposals. Regular updates on the new relationship and the progress of the trials are available on www.teachernet.gov.uk/newrelationship

Parent communication



www.julian-hawkins.com

With three children – Jonathon, Emily and Liam – at Grange Primary School in Derbyshire, it is no surprise that chair of governors Martin Way is passionate about good communication. "During a working week, my kids will see far more of their teachers than they will see of me or my wife," he points out. "School is their window on the world, so it is vital that as parents we're informed." And headteacher Richard Gerver couldn't agree more. "Education has to be holistic – it's not just about what happens between 9 and 3!"

Making sure the lines of communication are open is central to Grange Park's staff and parents, and one of their most important tools is the Pupil Handbook. Kept in pupils' bags (so parents know exactly where to find it) the Handbook lists class targets, as well as the weekly targets children set for themselves. Every half term parents receive a class newsletter, detailing what the class will be learning – in terms of both content and skills. As Richard says, the impact has been immediate. "We've noticed that children are doing personal research or going on a trip with their parents that relates to what they are doing in class."

Holding parents' evening in the middle instead of at the end of term has enabled teachers and parents to work together on issues that have arisen, and an open door policy (as well as Richard always standing at the school gate at home-time) guarantees parents easy access to staff. Encouraging parents to come into school as volunteers, and setting up a Parent's Forum with one parent per

class, have both helped to break down barriers between parents and school.

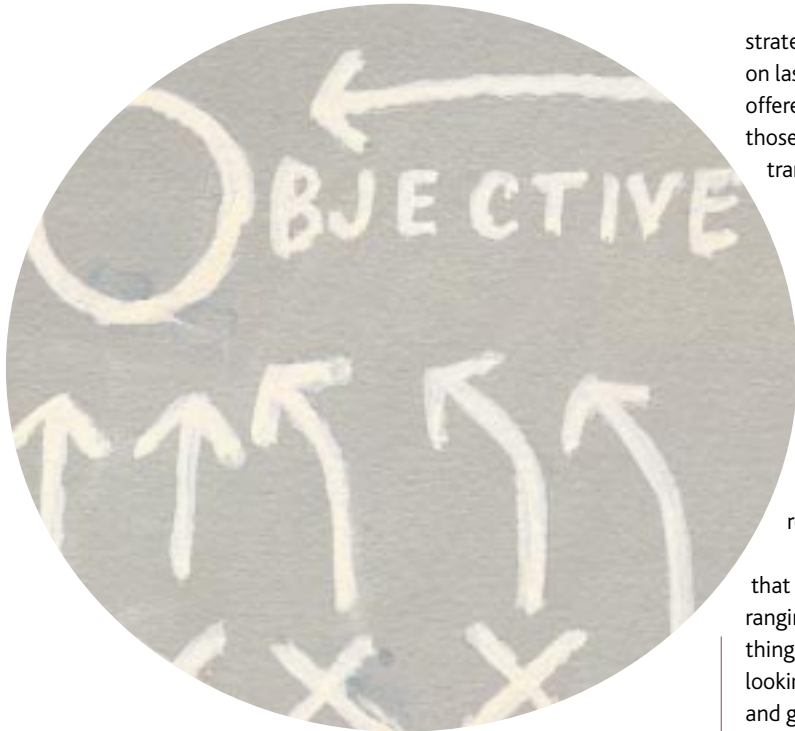
But perhaps the school's most innovative tools are the website (where parents can find newsletters, prospectuses and examples of their children's work) and the use of text messaging to contact parents. The school has found new technology is more cost-effective, but Martin thinks that it is often more effective in other ways, too. "By going to the website, parents effectively dip a big toe in the water and find out what's going on in the school."

For Richard, the governing body has been key to the success of the school's communication programme – not least because five of the 15 governors are parents. "The parent governors come back to us and say 'This hasn't worked' or 'We could do this better.' The feedback you get is vital in making sure that the service is right."

Both Martin and Richard have enjoyed working together on the programme and are keen to share their advice. For Martin, the key thing is to keep an open mind and embrace the technology that is available. For Richard it is to cherish your governing body. "Your governing body is your crucial link to your community – if you work with them as closely as you can, then you know that whatever you do implement will be something that your community will benefit from."

The school's website can be found at www.grange.derbyshire.sch.uk Also visit www.parentcentre.gov.uk or www.teachernet.gov.uk/whole-school/familyandcommunity/

Managing your budget



“THE MOST EXCITING THING IS THAT THE SCHEME IS LOOKING AT WHOLE SCHOOL TRAINING AND GOVERNORS ARE PART OF THAT”

GOVERNORS have welcomed the chance to be involved in the next stage of a wide-ranging financial training scheme for schools.

The Financial Management in Schools (FMiS) scheme enters its second phase this autumn and aims to help schools remodel their budgets to deliver workforce reform and improve standards.

The scheme, which began in October last year, has been extended so that this year it will support schools in both financial management and the implementation of guaranteed planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time. *School Workforce Reform – Financial Planning and PPA* workshops will offer important assistance to schools in planning all aspects of implementing the required contractual changes introduced through the National Agreement, particularly with respect to the financial implications. Workshops in

strategic financial planning – run on last year’s model – will be offered nationally, not just to those LEAs in receipt of the transition grant.

Terry Pearson, a National Governors Council (NGC) committee member, has been involved in the scheme’s steering group and says it’s an excellent opportunity for schools to show transparency in their strategic planning, adding that it should also reduce bureaucracy.

He also welcomed the fact that the training will be wide-ranging: “The most exciting thing is that the scheme is looking at whole school training and governors are part of that.”

Terry, who is a governor at Stimpson Avenue Primary School in Northampton and at Orchard Special School in Kettering, says governors will also have an important role in communicating to parents how schools plan to remodel their workforce.

Carol Woodhouse, treasurer of the National Association of School Governors (NASG, formerly NAGM), welcomes increased governor participation for phase two. “The problem was that it was seen very much as being for headteachers, but that’s been overcome and the governors’ organisations are completely behind it. I think it’s an important development,” she says.

Carol, who is chair of governors at Musbury Primary School in Devon, says governors need clarity when it comes to working with budgets and finance. “These things have their own accounting jargon and tend to be in about six point type so they’re very hard to read and

governors tend to struggle with them! They need demystifying,” she says.

Charles Clarke announced the FMiS scheme in October 2003. The DfES commissioned the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) and consultants KPMG to develop a varied menu of support and guidance to help schools manage their budgets.

The programme’s steering group included DfES officials and staff of KPMG and NCSL, as well as representatives from governor, local authority and headteacher associations, including the NASG and the NGC.

Phase one of the programme was launched at the beginning of this year and included: workshops for schools from the 51 LEAs eligible for targeted transitional grant; follow-up consultancy sessions with KPMG consultants for schools that needed additional support over and above the workshops; a financial management website; and an online helpdesk. Two places were available for each school invited to attend a workshop, one of which was earmarked for the headteacher.

By the end of March, workshops had been held for over 900 schools, and the website had more than 8,600 visits. The helpdesk received only a very small number of enquiries and was discontinued. Between January and July, KPMG carried out consultancy sessions with about 130 schools.

Phase two of the programme dovetails with the rolling workforce remodelling programme, and will run from autumn 2004 to March 2005. The programme is being opened up to schools in all LEAs in



England and it is expected that this will result in workshops for at least 10,000 schools. Two representatives from each school will be invited to attend *School Workforce Reform – Financial Planning and PPA* workshops, and governors are actively encouraged to take part. The workshops are designed to help schools make the best use of all the resources available to them, including financial management, and to effectively implement the contractual change on PPA when it comes into force in September 2005 (see box for details). Workshops in strategic financial planning will be scheduled for later in the year. Material to support governors through the implementation of the National Agreement and the wider remodelling agenda will be available in the autumn, including a third governors' pack which the National Remodelling Team is producing together with NASG, NGC and National Coordinators of Governor Services (NCOGs). This will be sent to all chairs of governors, NCOGs and headteachers at the beginning of October.

Contact your LEA for details of workshops in your area. For more information visit the FMI5 website at www.ncsl.org.uk/mediastore/image2/fin_mgmt/index.htm

The workshops will help schools:

- set provision of 10 percent PPA time in the context of workforce reform and remodelling in schools
- broaden understanding of the legislation of PPA and what it means in practice
- offer an insight into a range of strategies for implementing PPA and the benefits of each
- provide information, tools and support for financial planning
- provide materials and raise awareness of the support which schools can use to help in the implementation of PPA time
- identify the opportunities that remodelling presents to broaden the curriculum, enhance learning and raise standards
- highlight sources of remodelling support.

The Department has also launched a new Financial Management Standard and Toolkit website. Visit www.dfes.gov.uk/vfm for more details.

Tackling unofficial exclusion

Governors need to address unofficial exclusion by working with schools to ensure that positive, open behaviour management policies are in place and that this information is regularly reviewed and disseminated to parents and the school community.

They also need to be familiar with the Department for Education and Skills' policy on how and when it is legal for pupils to be removed from school sites and to take action to clearly flag this issue, if necessary, with the headteacher in the first instance, or the LEA.

Current DfES guidance is available at www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/ For copies of *Improving Behaviour and Attendance: Guidance on Managing Exclusion from Schools and Pupil Referral Units*, Ref: DfES/00354/2004, call Prolog on 0845 6022260.

Freedom of information

From January 2005 any individual will have the legal right to ask a school to have access to information held by that school.

The Freedom of Information (Fol) Act 2000 was introduced to promote greater openness and accountability across the public sector.

Governors will need to ensure that from next January schools handle requests in line with Fol. Guidance will be available this term and will complement that from the Department of Constitutional Affairs and the Information Commissioner – the independent authority responsible for administering and enforcing Fol. www.governornet.co.uk/foi

Guide to the Law – amendments

The first set of amendments to *A Guide to the Law for School Governors 2004* has been made.

All versions of the guide on GovernorNet have been amended and can be downloaded from www.governornet.co.uk/gttlcontent If you prefer to amend your own paper copy you can find instructions on how to do this by visiting www.governornet.co.uk/gttlamend1. To ensure the guide remains up-to-date, it is intended that amendments will be made termly online.

For more information contact john.britton@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

Changes to teachers' pay

The 2004 School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document and revised statutory guidance came into force on 1 September. Important changes include a new requirement for governors to agree a teachers' pay policy.

The policy must set out the basis on which governors determine teachers' pay, the dates when teachers will have their pay reviewed, and procedures for pay appeals. Other changes in the document include the ending of the upper pay scale at U3 and the abolition of external assessment for threshold decisions, which means that the head takes the final decisions. Statutory guidance accompanies the document. Explanatory notes and a new model pay policy are also available on www.teachernet.gov.uk/pay

Employment – anti-discrimination

Since December 2003 the legal grounds on which schools must avoid discrimination in all their employment practices have been extended. Both sexual orientation and religion or belief have been added to gender, race, colour, and ethnic or national origins. The web versions of the *Governors Guide to the Law* have been amended to reflect this. The relevant sections are Chapter 9, paragraph 28, and Chapter 11, paragraph 9. The Guide is at www.governornet.co.uk/gttl



Key tests for 14-19 reform

The final report of the Working Group on 14-19 Reform is expected to be published in October.

The government has identified five key tests to measure the success of the proposals:

- **Excellence:** Does it stretch the most able people?
- **Vocational:** Does it address the historic failure to provide a high-quality vocational offer that motivates young people?
- **Employability:** Does it prepare all young people for the world of work?
- **Assessment:** Does it reduce the burden of assessment?
- **Disengagement:** Does it stop the high drop-out rate at 16?

The government recommends that governors assess the curriculum and other activities on offer at their schools against these five tests. In particular they should consider how their schools may need to change to deliver a 14-19 learning programme that motivates young people to continue to learn. The DfES is also asking governors to consider whether their learning programme gives each young person an experience that is personalised to meet their needs, interests and aspirations. The final report will be published on the Working Group's website at www.14-19reform.gov.uk To find out more about personalised learning, visit www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/personalisedlearning

More investment for schools

As part of his Spending Review in July, the Chancellor of the Exchequer confirmed additional investment in education.

First announced earlier this year as part of the Budget, spending on education in the UK will rise from 5.4 per cent of GDP in 2004/05 to 5.6 per cent in 2007-08.

The Chancellor also announced an acceleration of the Sure Start Children's Centre programme which includes the target of up to 2500 centres by 2008, a pilot programme to deliver free part-time education

to 12,000 two year-olds in disadvantaged areas and free books for children.

www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spending_review



New academies open their doors

Five new academies have opened this September in Barnet, Hillingdon, Lambeth, Hackney and Northampton. This brings the total number of UK academies to 17.

Academies are all-ability schools established by sponsors from business, faith or voluntary groups in partnership with central government and local education partners.

They either replace existing schools facing challenging circumstances or meet a need for additional school places. The capital cost of the

academies is shared by the sponsors and the Department for Education and Skills, which also funds the academies' running costs.

Unveiling its five-year strategy for children and learners in the summer, the government announced plans to have 200 academies open or in the pipeline by 2010. For more information on the five-year strategy see the front page article. For more information on academies visit www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/academies

Exclusion

Being a member of a governing body exclusion panel can be a daunting prospect for any governor. However, the panel plays a key role in ensuring the exclusion process is fair by offering parents and the excluded child the opportunity to give their side of the story.

Why would a pupil be excluded?

There are a variety of reasons why a school decides to exclude a child. These include physical assault against a pupil or adult, verbal abuse or threatening behaviour, bullying, racist abuse, sexual misconduct, drug and alcohol related offences, damage to school or personal property, theft and persistent disruptive behaviour. Exclusions can be either for a fixed period, where the child is out of school for up to 45 days, or permanent, where the child is not allowed to return to school and the LEA must arrange full-time education at another school or other educational provision.

The governing body's role

The governing body must consider all permanent exclusions and some fixed term exclusions. This is usually delegated to the discipline committee. The quorum is three governors, with a clerk appointed by the governing body. The governors are required to review the headteacher's decision to exclude the pupil and they must by law have regard to the Department's guidance on exclusions. After considering all the evidence, they can decide to reinstate the pupil or uphold the headteacher's decision to exclude. If the governors uphold a permanent exclusion the parents can then appeal to an independent appeal panel.

Good practice

- It's very important that governors who review exclusions are trained in the exclusions process. Contact your LEA for details. Training materials, developed by ISCG for clerks and governors, can be viewed at www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/exclusion/gettingitright/
- Have a copy of the Department's latest exclusions guidance to hand (see below) and read all the papers associated with the case before attending the appeal hearing
- Keep an open mind. Are certain minorities or sectors of the school population being excluded more than others?
- Is exclusion the right thing for the school/child? Excluding a child can seriously affect his or her future. However, this has to be balanced against the needs of the whole school
- Has everything been done to support the child prior to the exclusion and has the school followed its own Behaviour Policy that has been agreed with the governors?

Further information

For details of the exclusion procedure visit www.governornet.co.uk/exclusionstrainingpack2004 Copies of the latest exclusions guidance, issued in August 2004, can be ordered from DfES Publications on 0845 6022260. Quote reference DFES/0354/2004.

Governor leadership training rolled out

Taking the Chair, the new training and development programme for chairs, vice-chairs and chairs of committees was successfully rolled out to LEA and Diocesan Board governor trainers during the summer term.

Courses based on the programme will be offered through governor support services from this September.

The flexible, practical and problem-solving programme is divided into five modules that aim to explore the skills required to lead and manage the work of a school governing body. It is targeted at prospective and new chairs who wish to develop their confidence and skills and experienced chairs who are keen to review their



effectiveness. To complement the programme, *Taking the Chair* is also available as a stand-alone distance learning pack. Copies can be obtained via LEA governor support services. For further information email angela.kindleyside@dfes.gsi.gov.uk or phone the DfES School Governance Team on 01325 391294.

Interactive whiteboards priority for schools



Interactive whiteboards have been made a national priority for the restructured ICT in Schools Grant (grant 31a) in 2004-05.

To complement this, the DfES has recently introduced new flexibilities on the use of Schools Devolved Formula Capital funding.

From April 2004, schools have been able to use

this money to purchase ICT infrastructure and equipment, including interactive whiteboards. This acknowledges the fact that schools are best placed to decide where the money is spent and allows local solutions to be matched to local needs and priorities.

In January 2004, Charles Clarke, secretary of state for education and skills, committed £25 million for interactive whiteboards for the financial year 2004-05. This was in addition to the £25 million announced in September 2003 for the financial year 2003-04. This £50 million is being split equally between the primary and the secondary sectors.

www.governor.net.co.uk/whiteboards

■ Governors can access ICT training through *learnirect*.

learnirect can help governors with both online courses and with identifying suitable ICT skills courses with local providers.

Contact *learnirect* at www.learnirect.co.uk or call 0800 100 900. Visit www.governor.net.co.uk/ictinschools for information on using ICT in schools.

Teachers' TV to launch early next year

Teachers and governors will step into the limelight when Europe's first television channel dedicated to those who work in schools is launched early next year.

The channel will carry education news and programmes on training, development and classroom resources. On air 18 hours each day, Teachers' TV will be available initially on Sky and Freeview and may also be distributed on NTL and Telewest. Teachers' TV will be supported by an

extensive website and an interactive service.

www.teachers.tv

• Meanwhile, Online Publications, the new online ordering service which allows schools and governors to order or download DfES publications and resources online, has been rolled out to 24 LEAs. The service, which replaces paper mailings to schools, will be available nationwide by November this year.

www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications

governornet

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

www.governor.net.co.uk

What's new on GovernorNet

Keep up with the law: important amendments have been made to the **Guide to the Law for School Governors** – view these online on GovernorNet.

www.governor.net.co.uk/gttlamend1

See the **Recent Additions** section to keep up with all the latest articles and documents added to the site.

www.governor.net.co.uk/recentadditions

For quick, easy-to-use **Overviews** of topics, including links to key documents and related websites, see our Overviews index page.

www.governor.net.co.uk/overviewindex

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Need help and advice?

GovernorLine is a free advice line that offers information and professional support to governors. Call 08000 722 181 or visit www.governorline.info



Websites

www.governornet.co.uk

Useful information for all school governors.

www.nagm.org.uk

National Association of School Governors (NASG)
Tel: 0121 643 5787. Email: governorhq@nagm.org.uk

www.ngc.org.uk

National Governors' Council (NGC)
Tel: 0121 616 5104 / Fax: 0121 616 5105
Email: office@ngc.org.uk

www.governors.fsnet.co.uk

Information for School and College Governors (ISCG)
Tel: 020 7229 0200 / Fax: 020 7229 0651
Email: iscg@governors.fsnet.co.uk

www.sgoss.org.uk

SGOSS recruits and brokers volunteers to become governors in schools that need them most. If you have a community vacancy contact info@sgoss.co.uk or call 0870 241 3883.

www.teachernet.gov.uk

Linking you to education resources and information.

Events

Parents Online Week - October 4-8

Take part in Parents Online week!

Hold your own event or add a Parents Online dimension to any school event already planned. You'll find the best free learning sites and experts live online to discuss the internet in education, homework and more at www.parentsonline.gov.uk/events

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Title	Initials
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Postcode	Age range of school

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Feedback



We're listening!

Many thanks to the thousands of governors who completed and returned the questionnaire in the January edition of Governors newsletter!

Over 90% of you think that the newsletter is relevant, over 80% of you think it's well written and designed, and 83% of you would recommend the newsletter to other governors.

You also let us know how we could improve Governors. To meet your needs we've now introduced a new Legislation Update column, to make it easier for you to keep up-to-date with changes in government regulations, and a Focus On section where we highlight areas of particular interest that you have suggested, such as exclusions, which you'll find featured in this edition.

You also told us that you wanted more case studies. So we've now

introduced a Learning Curve column where governors and teachers talk about their own experiences.

Of those of you that use GovernorNet, 83% of you found it relevant, 85% found it useful and 65% thought it was up-to-date. We're now working on making it even more relevant by updating the content and reviewing how the search engine and general site structure can be improved. If you have any comments or suggestions for GovernorNet, please email the team on governornet.team@dfes.gsi.gov.uk Further details of all the results can be found at www.governornet.co.uk/userquestionnaire If you have any further comments regarding the newsletter please email us at governor.feedback@dfes.gsi.gov.uk or write to Governors, DfES, Sanctuary Buildings, London SW1P 3BT.

Resources

Governor online village

A ground-breaking online community where school governors can meet and share knowledge is being set up in Essex.

The virtual village idea is the brainchild of a focus group of governors sharing ideas on information and communications. A team of governors has also produced a report on their work with a number of schools to develop and apply new self auditing tools on information. The aim of both is to create a new front-line of better informed, more confident and more effective school governors. For more details visit www.essexcc.gov.uk/governors

Free school meals

Children whose parents are in receipt of the following are entitled to receive free school meals: Income Support (IS); Income Based Job Seekers Allowance (IBJSA); support under part VI of the

Immigration and Asylum Act 1999; Child Tax Credit, provided they do not receive Working Tax Credit and have an annual taxable income from 6 April 2004 (as assessed by The Inland Revenue) which does not exceed £13,480. Children who receive IS or IBJSA in their own right are also eligible to receive free school meals.

www.teachernet.gov.uk/freemealsandtrips

Spectrum

The way the DfES communicates with schools is changing.

Postal mailings have now been replaced with email communications. However, mailings to chairs of governors will continue on a monthly basis and will include Spectrum, a magazine which includes details of all the Department's new publications.

An online version of Spectrum can be viewed at www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications

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