

Pedestrian power

How one school got its walking shoes on

Exclusion: the options

A need-to-know guide for governors

Sustainable learning

Funding for eco lessons



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Governors

Autumn Term 2008 • www.governor.net.co.uk

Rising high

Governors key to National Challenge

The National Challenge – a new £400 million package of measures to help schools with low GCSE results to raise their attainment – is the next phase of the government's school improvement strategy, and represents a real opportunity for schools that are in challenging circumstances.

Governors are key to the success of the programme, because their principal responsibility is to improve young people's learning and achievement. Governing bodies must ensure that, in their school, at least 30 per cent of pupils are achieving a minimum of five A*-C GCSEs (including English and maths) or equivalent, by 2011.

The achievement of good qualifications is central to the improvement of young people's

life chances, and to their prospects of progressing to further study and a successful career.

The Secretary of State, Ed Balls, said: "Each school below the floor target at its next governing-body meeting will want to review what it needs to do to rise above the floor target by 2011."

Schools below this threshold will get support from a National Challenge Adviser. This person will work with the school and local authority to broker a tailored package of support, to address the particular barriers to learning that the school faces. He or she will also be the school's School Improvement Partner (SIP).

For schools working in the most demanding circumstances or those with the lowest attainment,



a structural intervention – such as the setting-up of a federation with another school, or the creation of a new Academy or Trust school – may be the best way to improve outcomes for young people in

that particular local community.

For more information on the National Challenge, and the legislative changes proposed to support it, visit: www.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalchallenge



Photography: Sam Friedrich. Illustration: Robert Hanson

Free flicks for schools

Filmclub, a DCSF-funded scheme giving pupils free access to thousands of films through after-school clubs, is to be launched across the country after a successful pilot.

Over the next three years, Filmclub will be expanded to reach 7,000 schools. From an interactive website, students and teachers can select from some 60,000 titles – 1,500 of which

are arranged in special seasons aimed at young people. The website features film synopses, discussion topics and trailers.

As well as screenings in schools, Filmclub also arranges visits by actors (including Thandie Newton, pictured), directors and set designers.

[More information »](http://www.filmclub.org)
www.filmclub.org



Seeds of global change

Schools across the country are among the main beneficiaries of a new £5.5 million package to help teach global issues.

School football tournaments to promote fair trade; radio broadcasting workshops; and farm visits for primary pupils are among the new projects sharing the funding boost

from the Department for International Development.

The bulk of this year's Development Awareness Fund grants will go to education and youth projects, with the aim of getting children and young people involved in fighting global poverty. Half the total funding will provide training

and support to help youth workers and teachers bring a global dimension to their work.

Individual projects that received grants in the latest round of funding include UK farm visits (pictured) run by the charity Send a Cow.

For details, visit: www.dfid.gov.uk/funding/daf.asp

CONFERENCE

This year's NCOGS annual conference will be held at London's Strand Palace Hotel on 1-3 October.

It will explore topics such as the future of school leadership, streamlining governing bodies, issues of quality and accountability, and partnerships between headteachers and governors.

There will also be a review of the progress made since 2004 and the challenges faced through engaging with key partners. **Visit:** www.ncogs.org.uk

ADMISSIONS WORKING

Latest DCSF statistics for admission appeals show that the system is working for the vast majority of parents.

The figures show that 98 per cent of primary admissions offers and more than 94 per cent of those at secondary level did not have any appeal heard against them in 2006/07. They also show that just over a third of appeals overall are successful.

NPQH CHANGES

Information for governors on changes to the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) has been published by the National College of School Leadership. The redesigned NPQH is designed to provide aspiring heads with a 'flexible, personalised development pathway'. **Visit:** www.ncsl.org.uk/programmes/npqh-index

Let it out, children told

The NSPCC has launched a campaign encouraging pupils of all ages to call its ChildLine service to discuss problems they may be experiencing, whether at school or at home.

Posters are being sent to schools with the message that 'whatever your worry, it's better out than in' – and the charity has developed a new-look

website for children, with information on what happens if they get in touch with ChildLine.

The drive follows a poll that found children often don't know how to talk to teachers and other adults about their problems. Only a fifth of the 1,024 respondees said they felt that they had someone to confide in at school.

Visit the new-look website at: www.childline.org.uk

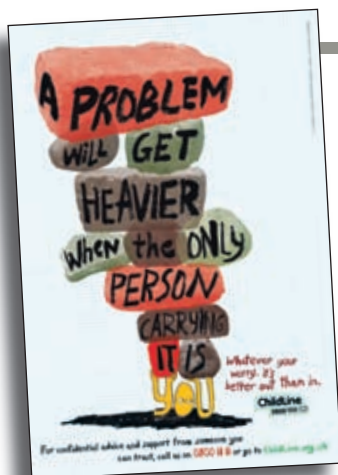
Change focus



Schools minister Jim Knight has called on school governors to use "incisiveness, flexibility and focus" in their role as "strategic architects and champions" of the ambitious reforms contained within the Children's Plan.

Addressing the Annual Joint Conference on Governance, Mr Knight gave his first detailed public speech on the proposed changes to school governance. As reported in the last issue of *Governors*, the Children's Plan envisages smaller, strategic governing bodies and improved training for their members.

Mr Knight said: "The review will make its own recommendations on this, but there is a strong argument that [making governing bodies smaller] could help them become more incisive and better able to fulfil an effective strategic role."



Assessment for Learning

The DCSF has published *The Assessment for Learning Strategy*, designed to support school leaders in using assessment information to plan provision and improve the quality of the assessment process. It describes how the £150 million strategy will be delivered over three years, and gives details of resources available to schools. To download, visit: www.publications.teachernet.gov.uk (ref: DCSF-00341-2008).

Diploma update

Schools Minister Jim Knight has announced £81 million of extra funding to help teachers prepare to deliver the new Diploma.

The multi-million-pound package for 2008-09 is in addition to funding to train those who will be delivering the Diploma from September. It will ensure that, as the Diploma qualification continues to be rolled out to more secondary

schools and colleges, their teachers and leaders are fully trained to teach it.

Diplomas are being offered this September, for the first time, in a small group of schools and colleges, but will eventually be available country-wide. Advanced Diplomas will be worth up to three and a half A levels. For more details, visit: www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19

LEARNING CURVE

All aboard the walking bus

As if the challenge of building a new school wasn't enough for governors of Riverhead Infants' School near Sevenoaks, Kent, they had the added pressure of ensuring that most pupils would walk to the new premises.

"We became interested in walk-to-school initiatives because we had to build a new school on the outskirts of the village of Riverhead," explains vice-chair of governors Sue O'Mahoney. "The new school was finished in 2002, but to get planning permission we had to guarantee to the local council that we would get most of the pupils walking to school. Previously only 45 per cent of them walked to school regularly, and we needed to change that."

Now, some 80 per cent of Riverhead's 270 pupils in Reception, and Years 1 and 2

hit the pavement for at least some of the way to school. Walking to school is part of the eco-friendly culture at Riverhead, one of the first schools to produce a travel plan (back in 2000) and whose state-of-the-art building - with its 'living' sedum roof - was designed with the environment in mind.

Riverhead's governors played a pivotal role in balancing the concerns and interests

of key stakeholders in the school: pupils, parents and the wider community alike. Sue worked closely with the headteacher in leading a multi-pronged initiative to get more pupils travelling to school on foot. Initial work involved conducting research and tapping into support from Kent Highways and environmental charities like Sustrans.

"One of the things we did early on was put together a really colourful leaflet. It had letters from the parish council and residents association to convince people of the benefits of walking to school, and a map showing car parks, walking routes and permissive footpaths," says Sue.

Governors involved parents on a committee to formulate ideas - from 'Walk on Wednesdays' and 'Car-Free Fridays' to special assemblies and sponsored walks featuring parents in costume.

Sue established the school's first 'walking bus', and two others have since been set up. Governors lobbied for corporate sponsorship of safety tabards, and championed the

initiative among parents, some of whom were unsure of the benefits. As Sue says: "It was important to walk to school; we knew that the last thing we should do is give up."

"Walking to school is part of Riverhead's eco-friendly culture"



Fresh faces

The School Governors' One-Stop Shop (SGOSS) has launched a campaign aimed at encouraging more young people to join governing bodies.

The Fresh Faces campaign website explains how to become a governor and what the role entails. SGOSS staff have also visited university campuses to seek out new recruits, and the organisation has set up a group on the social networking website Facebook – under the name 'Fresh Faces Fresh Voices' – to make contact with potential candidates. **Visit:** www.sgoss.org.uk/freshfaces

Value added

The DCSF is providing free financial consultancy to help schools get value for money.

Schools will be eligible to receive a day of independent, tailored advice from a team of local education and financial experts, made up of governors, ex-headteachers and ex-deputies.

The Value for Money service – which is a consultation rather than an inspection – aims to enable schools to get the most from their resources, and consists of three phases.

For details, visit: www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/vfm

RESOURCES

NCOGS GUIDE

The latest edition of the guidebook for governor services co-ordinators is now available from NCOGS. It provides information about regional representatives and contacts, and details financial policy and strategies for improving the effectiveness of the organisation.

Download the 2008 version from: www.ncogs.org.uk

WORKPLACE GOVERNORS

Employers looking to set up a governor scheme for staff can download a new guide produced by Business in the Community in collaboration with the School Governors' One-Stop Shop. It details the benefits of encouraging and enabling employees to become governors.

Download from: www.sgoss.org.uk/home/publications.htm

DIVERSITY IN LEADERSHIP

This new resource looks to help the achievement of greater diversity in school leadership by highlighting its benefits. It offers suggestions and examples of best practice to deliver leadership diversity through recruitment, selection, leadership development and succession planning.

www.ncsl.org.uk/tlt-home/diversity-guide

RECRUITING LEADERS

A new website from the NCSL offers guidance on seeking a new head and other senior leaders for your school. There is advice on each stage of the process, from preparation to induction and evaluation, and a set of recruitment tools to ensure it runs smoothly. **www.ncsl.org.uk/tlt-home/tlt-recruiting-leaders-index**

A good degree of help

The Aimhigher Associates mentoring scheme, funded with £21 million from the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, will see 5,500 university students recruited from September 2009 to help school pupils progress with their education.

The Associates will offer support and share their experiences, aiming to smooth pupils' way through school, into higher education. The scheme will support the building of long-term relationships between university students and school/college pupils as young as 14. It is hoped that such

relationships will develop over time, with the Associates on hand to provide support to pupils as they make important decisions about their education and future careers.

www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/programme_information/aimhigher_associates_scheme.cfm

INFORMATION

■ www.governornet.co.uk

Useful information for all school governors

■ www.nga.org.uk

National Governors' Association (NGA). Tel: 0121 643 5787

■ ISCG

Information for School and College Governors. 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





Inspiring insights

Growing Ambitions is a service that links schools with inspirational business people or public sector workers willing to speak about their jobs to students.

The not-for-profit organisation, backed by the British Chambers of Commerce, aims to help young people make informed career and training choices by providing insights into the different kinds of occupations.

Speakers come from all sectors, including banking, industry, and the armed forces, and schools can register online to search for speakers (£100 for a 12-month subscription). There is a £20 fee per speaker booking, although secondary schools are advised to contact their local 14-19 consortium to see if they can claim funding. Governors wishing to book a talk for their school, or to register as speakers themselves, can visit: www.growingambitions.org

LEGISLATION

Admissions consultation

The DCSF invites governors to respond to proposed changes in the school admission process, which aim to make the system as fair, transparent and straightforward for parents as possible.

Proposals include: having parents apply for primary school places to the LA in which they live, rather than the one in which the school is based; allowing parents to apply for at least three primary schools; setting key dates nationally; and requiring all admission authorities to maintain waiting lists when they are oversubscribed.

The report also lists improvements aimed at ensuring fair access to education

for all children. This covers securing places for children who are without a school during the academic year (for example after exclusion) and making sure that all schools have their fair share of students with challenging behaviour.

The consultation runs until 2 October, and the full consultation and supporting documents are available to view online: www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations

ContactPoint directory

ContactPoint is a new online directory that aims to support cross-sector work vital to children's services. It will start being rolled out to LAs in the next few months.

Languages

FOCUS ON...

What measures is the government taking to encourage more young people to study modern foreign languages?

The Routes into Languages programme was developed in response to the 2005 report 'The National Languages Strategy for HE', and the Roberts review, published the same year, which led to the classification of languages as strategic, vulnerable subjects. The programme aims to increase the number of young people choosing languages, from GCSE through to university. The Higher Education Funding Council for England and the DCSF are co-funding the £8 million project, developed with input from the Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies, the University Council of Modern Languages, and the National Centre for Languages.

How will this effect schools?

Universities will work with schools as part of regional consortia, with the aim of enthusing pupils about languages. Student ambassadors reading languages at degree level will assist in running activities and events country-wide, including taster sessions, revision help and mentoring. To forge stronger links between languages as a subject and as a career, two national networks have been created for

interpreting and translation. These bring together professional bodies, educators and employers to develop opportunities for students, such as work placements, and events for careers advisors. Routes into Languages has also created resources for teachers, including posters and CD-ROMs.

What other projects does the programme involve?

Three research projects have been commissioned. These look into mapping world languages spoken in the country, the role of language programmes in attracting and supporting major international events such as the Olympics, and the emphasis on enterprise skills in language courses. Final reports of all three projects can now be downloaded from the Routes into Languages website (see below).

When will the programme run?

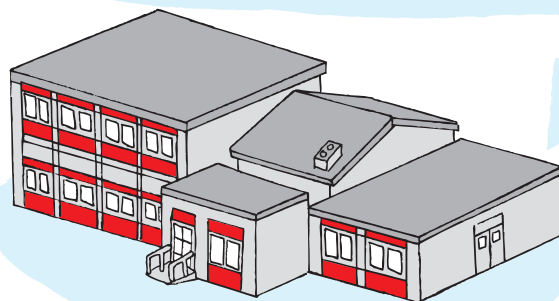
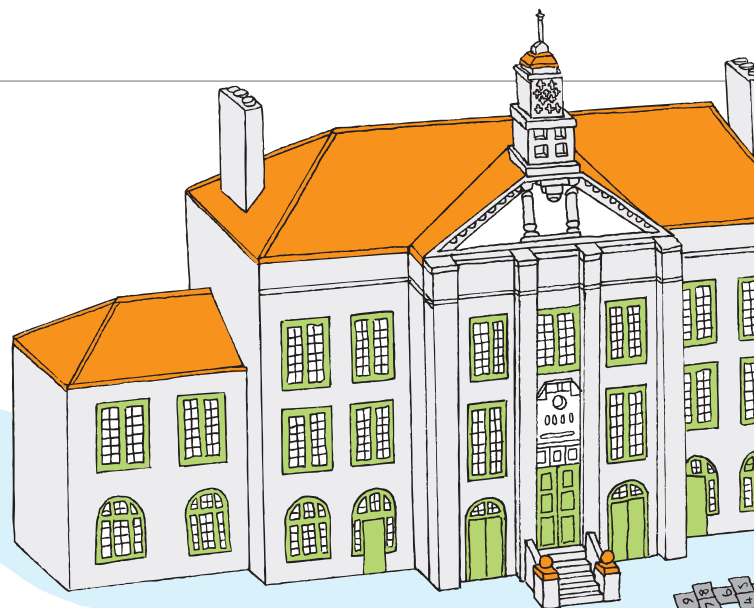
Routes into Languages was launched in 2006 and is due to run for four years, until 2010.

Where can I learn more?

The Routes into Languages website has details about national events and online resources. Visit: www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk

The system will provide a quick way for practitioners to see who else is working with an individual child, in order to increase the efficiency of how children's needs are met. Each child will have a directory entry containing basic contact details for them and relevant professionals, such as their education and care providers. This will help to save time and prevent duplication, for example by reducing the number of repeat assessments or referrals, which can be distressing for a child and their family.

ContactPoint will not include detailed information such as a child's school or medical records. Visit: www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/contactpoint



The 'in' crowd

A look at the different ways schools can deal with exclusions

By **Eileen Field** Illustration **Damien Weighill**

Excluding pupils from school, whether for a fixed term or permanently, is never an easy decision and is usually the last resort when dealing with difficult, disruptive or dangerous behaviour. A period spent out of school is designed to give the excluded pupil time to reflect on their actions. It also gives classmates the chance to learn, free from the distraction of the excluded pupil's behaviour.

Although it is the headteacher's responsibility to issue fixed-term and permanent exclusions to pupils where appropriate, governors also play an important role in the process. While the head creates the school's exclusion policy, it is the governing body's obligation to approve the head's strategy.

The 'sixth day' exclusion law, which came into force a year ago, has resulted in some schools rethinking their exclusion policy. This law states that schools and local authorities are obliged to provide suitable, full-time education from the sixth school day of a fixed-term exclusion. How a school provides this education is left to the senior management team, but it must equate to 21-25 hours (depending on the pupil's age) of supervised learning a week.

Schools are using a range of models to comply with this law. Some schools are working alone, others are working together in clusters to provide a greater range of resources, and to reduce the expenditure per school on the management of exclusions.

Each school will need to find the best solution to suit its particular needs, and a sample of the most common approaches follows:

Managed moves

A managed move is the process of removing a pupil from one school's roll and placing them with another school. This can succeed in addressing the issue, for example by removing the leader of a disruptive group. The downside is that the behaviour can move with the pupil.

Zero exclusion policy

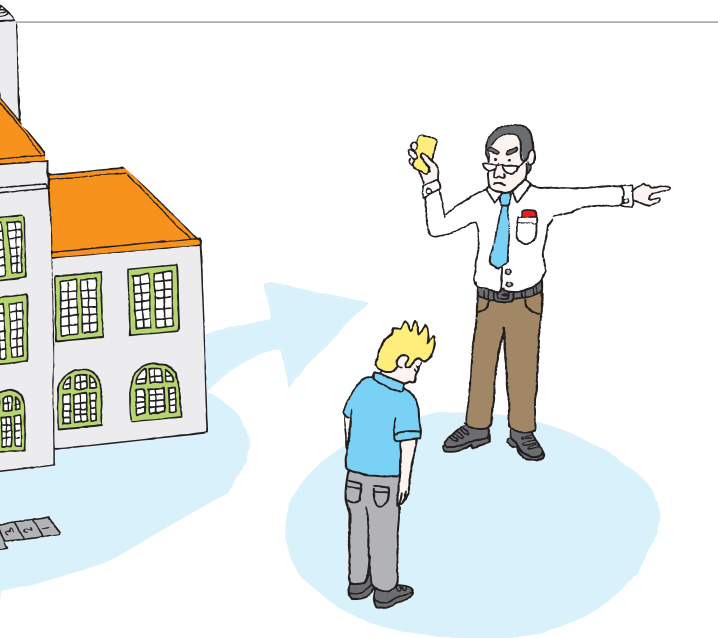
Some schools have opted to try to eliminate permanent exclusions. This option is likely to require significant investment in resources to support behavioural problems.

Exclusions of a few days

In this case, schools avoid having fixed-term exclusions that run into the sixth day. Exclusions like this can help nip problem behaviour in the bud, but such a short time is not always appropriate for more serious cases.

Learning Support Centres

The commonest approach adopted by schools that want greater control is the creation of their own Learning Support Centre (LSC) or inclusion unit. Schools doing this stand the best chance of managing pupils' successful re-integration into the classroom. However, there may be



“As long as governors are aware of the options, they can help their headteacher make the right choice for their school”

a range of ages and abilities in the unit, and it can be difficult to provide personalisation and specialist teaching to all pupils. This can be alleviated by schools working in a cluster – that way, they should be able to provide a greater range of resources.

Schools are also starting to use outside providers, including virtual schools. Pupils access lessons by logging on to their PC, and can communicate with teachers verbally, or via instant messaging and interactive whiteboard, throughout lessons. This allows an LSC to fulfil its requirement of 21-25 hours of education by subject specialists, without having to provide the range of teachers needed.

PLAN AHEAD

Now is the best time to plan or revise an inclusion policy and help to resolve any issues – particularly for Key Stage 4 pupils, before they take their GCSEs. No single solution will work for everyone, but as long as governors are aware of the options, they can help their headteacher make the right choice for their school.

■ Download the new DCSF guide *Improving Behaviour and Attendance: Guidance on Exclusion from Schools and Pupil Referral Units* from: www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications

Eileen Field is a governor at Birchwood High School, Hertfordshire, and headteacher of the online school, Accipio Learning.

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 (letters may be edited).

BEST LETTER

Dear Editor

I have been a governor now for eight years. I have found my role as a critical friend both valued and rewarding. Yes, there have been times when awkward questions are raised; how else can there be the checks and balances? When it comes to things like premises maintenance and repairs, cheapest is not necessarily best, and tenders/contracts should always be viewed on the basis of providing best value for money.

For example, the cheapest tender may not be able to undertake the work at a time that is convenient to the school. That is not to say you should not ask for reasons behind choices made. Governors have a responsibility to uphold, and that cannot be achieved without understanding all the facts behind decisions made. It can sometimes take time to integrate, particularly if other governors have been there for some time, but it will happen.

Ken Voller, Parent Governor, Upper Shirley High School, Southampton

■ Dear Editor

I am very disappointed at the attitude of some governors to training. I am a link governor at a secondary school. None of our newly appointed governors over the last two years has attended training, not even the two basic ‘induction for new governors’ courses run by the local authority.

When I became a governor I attended all the free courses available, because I wanted to be an asset to the school. What can be done to encourage new governors to attend training?

Name and address supplied

■ Dear Editor

A governor recently commented [Inbox, last issue] about his school employing expensive contractors, saying he was thinking about resigning. I’ve been a governor for three years, and when I first volunteered, I too felt no one was open to change. I am now the vice chair; we now have open discussions, and the tendering process is more beneficial for the school.

I am proud to be part of what our school has achieved. We governors do not volunteer for fame and fortune – we volunteer to help. Sometimes

this help is not welcome, people are not open to change and barriers are put up, but with determination and hard work it will pay off.

Steve Guthrie, vice chair of governors, Snape Wood Primary School, Nottingham

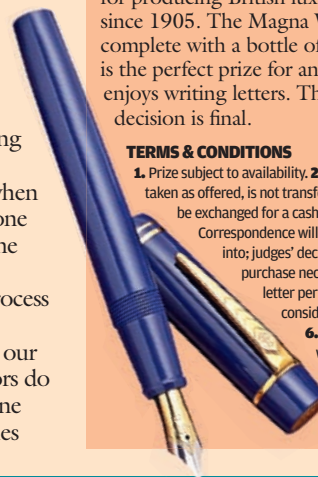
To read more letters, visit » www.governornet.co.uk/governorsletters

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The Best Letter in the next issue of *Governors* will win a Magna Writer fountain pen from Onoto, famous for producing British luxury pens since 1905. The Magna Writer, complete with a bottle of Onoto ink, is the perfect prize for anyone who enjoys writing letters. The editor’s decision is final.

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1. Prize subject to availability.
2. Prize must be taken as offered, is not transferable and cannot be exchanged for a cash equivalent.
3. Correspondence will not be entered into; judges’ decision is final.
4. No purchase necessary.
5. Only one letter per school will be considered for a prize.
6. Authors of letters will be deemed to have agreed to be bound by these rules.



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IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Why did you decide to become a governor?

I thought my background in the arts, coupled with my Sage management role, might be helpful.

Have you found your musical background useful in your role as governor?

I've been able to give the school advice on various aspects of music and performance, but also things like team-building and restructuring. Part of my role at The Sage Gateshead is to run our orchestra, so I have experience of managing teams.

Does being a governor have any impact on your professional life?

It's always interesting to see how another organisation works. It can be very useful because you connect with people in the city who come from different walks of life.

Is there a way that students at the school can voice their opinions to you?

The main thing is that we meet the staff regularly and are kept in touch with events. The opportunity for students to speak to us is very important. That's something we're working on now.

What are the specific challenges at your school?

It's a girl's school, and the governors are all people who believe that a single-sex education for girls is a good and useful thing. Whatever a girl says she wants to do, whatever her ambition is, she'll be taken seriously and a plan will be put into place to help her achieve it.

High school musical

By Georgina Bawden

Simon Clugston was a professional cellist for 25 years, and is now the performance programme director (classical) of The Sage Gateshead, managing the Northern Sinfonia. He brings his business experience and love of the arts to his role as governor at Central Newcastle High School.

What areas would you like to see covered in future issues of *Governors*?

Email ideas to:
research@governorsnewsletter.co.uk

governornet

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

Moving on up

■ *Moving on Up* is a magazine that explains pupils' options at Year 6, as they get ready to move up to secondary school. Schools are encouraged to give copies to every Year 6 student.

Shakespeare for all

■ A booklet has been published that offers teachers ideas for working with Shakespeare across all the key stages. It is designed to help children and young people to make progress in their understanding and enjoyment of the Bard of Avon.

School admissions

■ The DCSF has launched a consultation outlining proposals to make the admissions process for parents as fair, transparent and straightforward as possible. Governors' views are welcomed.



Need help and advice?

GovernorLine is a free advice line that offers information and professional support to governors. Call **08000 722181** or visit www.governorline.info

■ *Governors* on tape: visually impaired governors can listen to *Governors* on audio tape. **For a free tape, contact Susie Fisher at a2i on 0117 973 6013 or email her at susie.fisher@a2i.co.uk**

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