Who needs to know what?
Your at-a-glance guide to information sharing

Networking with parents
How ICT can help build home-school relations

Vernon Coaker
Getting tough on youth crime

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Governors

Spring Term 2010 • www.governornet.co.uk

Class action

New campaign aiming to recruit thousands of lawyers as governors

A campaign has been launched to encourage more lawyers to become governors, in an effort to reduce the national shortage of volunteers on governing bodies.

A Local Lawyer in Every School (ALLIES) is an alliance of key organisations in the legal profession and education sector, including School Governors' One-Stop Shop and The Law Society. It will seek to help schools establish links with local law firms, and to promote greater take-up of school governor vacancies by solicitors and other legal professionals.

Rebecca Hilsenrath, chief executive of LawWorks, one of the legal charities behind the scheme, said: "The skills required for legal work and governing overlap, both using 'soft' and technical skills, so volunteering to be a governor is an obvious choice for individuals in the legal profession wishing to expand their skill set and to try something new. There are also huge benefits to employers of having a staff with broader and more varied skills."

The DCSF-backed campaign was launched nationally after a Law Society survey revealed a high level of interest among members in taking up school governorship posts. The survey found that one in 10 of its members had either been a school governor, or currently held the post.

One third of solicitors who had not served as governors said it was something that they would like to do, but many said they wouldn't know how to go about applying for the role. Law Society president Robert Heslett said: "While many solicitors already devote their free time to being a school governor, there remains a shortage which the profession is well-placed to step in and reduce. Solicitors becoming school governors are not acting in their capacity as lawyers, but they do have useful skills which allow them to contribute to the effective governance of a school."

For more information, visit: www.sgoss.org.uk/allies

Going green for 10:10

Schools are being encouraged to join thousands of organisations working to reduce the UK's carbon footprint, by signing up to the 10:10 climate change campaign.

The 10:10 target is a 10 per cent reduction in emissions over a 12-month period, compared with the preceding 12 months. You can choose any date before 31 August 2010 to mark the start of your target period. A key part of signing up to 10:10 is committing to keep track of your use of electricity so that you can measure progress in reducing emissions – there are tips and inspiring case studies from schools that have already signed up, on the 10:10 schools website.

www.1010uk.org/education

department for children, schools and families

Lessons on livestock

Taking pupils on a farm visit can help to dispel "deep ignorance" about where food comes from, and provide opportunities for learning across the curriculum, according to a new study.

The report by Kingston University says that visits to working farms – such as those arranged through the Government-funded Educational Access scheme – help to address basic gaps in children's knowledge of agriculture.

The study also suggests that more schools should be encouraged to visit farms on a regular basis. To find out more about farm visits for schools, go to: www.naturalengland.org.uk and click on 'students and teachers'.

Support is just a call or email away

This issue of *Governors* includes a set of GovernorLine information stickers, to help readers promote the service to friends and colleagues on governing bodies. The free helpline – which deals with about 6,000 calls every year – offers informed and confidential advice and support to governors in maintained schools in England. Call free on 08000 722 181 (Monday to Friday 9am to 10pm, weekends and public holidays 11am to 4pm), or send an email from: www.governorline.info. A TextPhone facility is also available.

Aimhigher goes nationwide

An initiative that aims to inspire youngsters from disadvantaged backgrounds to apply to university is being rolled out nationally this term, following a successful trial.

An estimated 5,500 undergraduates, all of whom attended state schools, are now working as mentors on the £21 million Aimhigher Associates scheme, providing advice and encouragement to school pupils across the country.

Minister for higher education David Lammy said: "University should be open to all, regardless of background, and we must make sure people know from a young age how they can apply."

For more details about the scheme, visit: www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner

CO-OP SCHOOLS

Secretary of State Ed Balls has called on more schools to consider setting up co-operative trusts. Fifteen co-op trusts – involving more than 25 schools – are already up and running, and a further 120 schools are exploring the co-operative governance model. **For info, visit: www.school.coop**

GOVERNORS ON THE GTC

Two school governors were among those elected to serve as members of the 64-strong General Teaching Council, the body responsible for the registration of 500,000 teachers. **www.gtce.org.uk**

SEN REVIEW

The DCSF has outlined plans for a review of the supply of teachers who are trained to meet the needs of students with severe learning difficulties. The review is part of a package of measures aimed at providing better support for disabled pupils and those with SEN. **www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/sen**

STEPS4LIFE

A new initiative to help young people set themselves achievable goals for a healthier lifestyle has been launched. Find out how you can get your school involved by visiting the SmallSteps4Life website: **http://smallsteps4life.direct.gov.uk/teachers/home**

Photography: Monty Rakusen/Photolibrary; Phil Fisk (Vernon Coaker) Vernon Coaker interview: Lucie Carrington

"It's often in school that the early warning signs of anti-social behaviour become apparent"

Safer schools

Schools minister Vernon Coaker on how governors can help tackle youth violence

For the vast majority of schools, serious youth violence doesn't appear on the radar. Yet they still have a part to play in creating a safer environment for pupils – both inside and outside the school gates. The DCSF has joined forces with the Home Office to flag up the role of governors in tackling serious youth violence, and youth crime in general.

Schools minister Vernon Coaker, in an exclusive interview with *Governors*, explains the thinking behind the initiative: "In most of our schools serious youth violence is not an issue. But it is an issue that all schools and governing bodies should discuss and consider.

"We don't want to demonise our young people, most of whom are hard working, well behaved, and have no intention of breaking the law. But it is often in school that the early warning signs of poor and anti-social behaviour become apparent."

To be effective, governors need to know whether or not youth crime is a problem for their pupils. This means being aware of any challenging behaviour patterns among pupils, and building links with other agencies to have a view of youth crime within the wider community. In addition, governors need to be sure the school has effective strategies for dealing with poor behaviour, violent incidents and low-level crime.

Informal strategies could involve using PSHE lessons to discuss crime and its consequences with young people. It's a good way of finding out what's going on, and of identifying pupils who might need further help and support. There are also more formal initiatives available. For instance, schools could seek representation on the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, or they could set up a Safer School Partnership. These enable schools to work more closely with the local police by encouraging officers from their local station into the classroom.

"They are not there to enforce discipline in schools," says Mr Coaker. "Their role is to educate young people and challenge their preconceptions of what crime is, how the legal system works and their responsibilities as young citizens."

The Government is also running the Tackling Knives Action Programme (TKAP) to deal with all serious youth violence. One way to reach young people is through schools, where activities can be run to raise awareness of the implications of serious violence.

It's a major crime prevention measure, says Home Office minister David Hanson. "We are bringing the police, justice and school systems together so a small problem doesn't escalate into a major issue as pupils get older."

Our regular feature, Learning Curve, will return in the Summer Term issue, to be published in May.

SAFER SCHOOL LINKS

- Safer School Partnerships: www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/sspg/
- It Doesn't Have to Happen: www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/stopknifecrime/
- Tackling Serious Youth Violence: www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/violencereduction/tsyv
- Gangs and Group Offending guidance: www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=12639

Behaviour challenge

Secretary of State Ed Balls has issued a 'behaviour challenge' to local authorities, targeting those with a high proportion of schools where behaviour is rated 'satisfactory'. These LAs will be expected to develop a plan, with support from the National Strategies, to help schools achieve 'good' or 'oustanding' standards of behaviour. The DCSF has also produced a leaflet to show parents how they can work with schools on behaviour issues. For more details, visit: **www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/bc**

Recruiting made easy

The new Schools Recruitment Service is up and running. Since the online jobs service went live last term, more than 50 local authorities have signed up – representing some 8,000 schools across the country.

It was developed by the DCSF to provide a faster and cheaper way to advertise jobs. Schools and local authorities can upload vacancies, while candidates can apply for jobs online. The cost is based on headcount – a typical secondary school can expect to pay about £250 a year for the service. **For more details, visit: www.schoolsrecruitment.dcsf.gov.uk**

INFORMATION

- **www.governornet.co.uk** Useful information for all school governors
- **www.nga.org.uk** National Governors' Association (NGA). Tel: 0121 237 3780
- **www.governors.uk.com** Information for School and College Governors (ISCG) Tel: 01483 300280
- **www.sgoss.org.uk** SGOSS recruits and brokers volunteers to become governors in schools. Tel: 020 7354 9805

Build a better playground

Primary pupils are being asked to take the lead in designing new play areas for their schools – and have the chance to win up to £10,000 to see their ideas brought to life.

In a competition being run by the charity Kids First Trust under its Playground Partnerships scheme, schools are invited to submit a design portfolio detailing the current state of their outdoor play areas, and the improvements they would like to make.

The winning school will receive £10,000 to make the desired improvements, while 10 runners-up will receive £250 each. The deadline for applications is 18 March 2010. For details, visit: www.kidsfirsttrust.org/playgroundpartnerships

RESOURCES

NGA CONFERENCE

The annual conference of the National Governors' Association takes place on 27 January at the Russell Hotel in London. This event, which has as its theme 'Working with Governors', will address key elements of the 21st Century Schools White Paper. **www.nga.org.uk/events.aspx**

TRUST SCHOOLS UPDATE

A progress review of the trust schools programme, based on interviews with the first 120 open trust schools, is now available for download. The review, carried out by the Trust and Foundation Schools Partnership, can be downloaded from: **www.trustandfoundationschools.org.uk**

EVERY CHILD MATTERS

The East Riding Association of Governing Bodies has produced an ECM resource pack for governors, which can be accessed for free by governors at schools across the country. It can be downloaded from: **www.eragb.net (click on 'Governor Guides').**

LEGISLATION

Drugs guidance

The DCSF has announced its intention to make Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE), including drug and alcohol education, compulsory from September 2011. To help schools plan their drug and alcohol curriculum, the DCSF has produced a new document, *Drugs: Guidance for Schools*, which is now available in draft form for consultation.

Headteachers and governing bodies are invited to submit their views via an online consultation on the guidance (deadline 15 February). The final version of the document, incorporating appropriate comments, will be published in 2010. For more details, visit: **www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations**

Safer recruitment

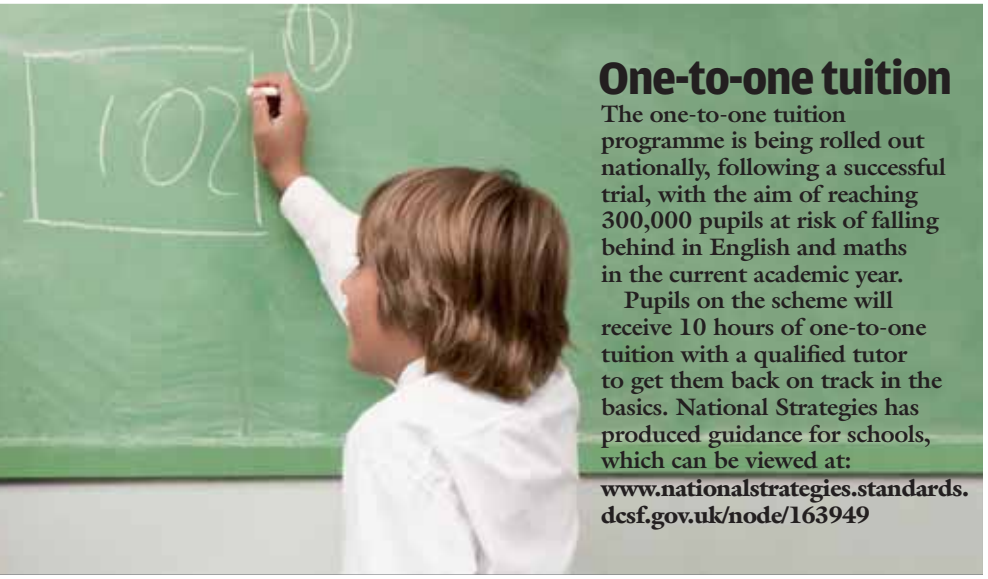
Safer recruitment training, developed by the DCSF following the Soham murders, is due to become mandatory for schools from January 2010. It was originally proposed in a consultation on the amendments to the School Staffing Regulations.

If you completed the training with the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services before 1 November 2009, your certificate remains valid. The Safer Recruitment programme (online training and workshops) is now being managed by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC).

For more information, and access to the training, visit: **www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/safeguarding/safer-recruitment**

School records

The Children's Plan Progress Report (**www.dcsf.gov.uk/oneyearon**) commits the Government to reviewing the secondary legislation governing the information that schools keep on pupils (in educational records and school reports), and on themselves (in school prospectuses). Governors are invited to read and respond to a public consultation on the proposed amendments, which are intended to give parents better access to information. Visit: **www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations**



One-to-one tuition

The one-to-one tuition programme is being rolled out nationally, following a successful trial, with the aim of reaching 300,000 pupils at risk of falling behind in English and maths in the current academic year.

Pupils on the scheme will receive 10 hours of one-to-one tuition with a qualified tutor to get them back on track in the basics. National Strategies has produced guidance for schools, which can be viewed at: **www.nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/163949**

Photography: Glow Images/Getty Images

FOCUS ON...

Information sharing

What is information sharing?

Information sharing is essential to enable early intervention and preventative work, for safeguarding and promoting welfare, as well as wider public protection. It is based on giving the right information about students at the right time to other professionals who need to know, whether they are in school or other services such as health, social work or youth justice. Anyone working with children needs to know how and when students' details should be shared.

What are the key factors to consider when sharing information?

It is important to maintain a balance between the need to retain the trusted relationship between teachers and students and the need to share information to benefit and improve their life chances. The decision to share or not to share information must always be based on professional judgement about the safety and wellbeing of the person, in accordance with legal, ethical and professional obligations. Obtaining informed and explicit consent for information sharing is best practice.

What role do governors play?

Teachers need to know that governors are committed to the principles of information sharing and supportive of good practice. Teachers and other school staff need training to help them to understand how to share information lawfully and professionally, and they need sources of advice and support for difficult information sharing decisions. These will help to give staff the confidence to use their professional judgement and share information wherever it is appropriate to do so.

How can governors support teachers in sharing information effectively?

Governors should ensure that an effective information sharing governance framework, establishing common policies and standards, is in place. This must always recognise the importance of teachers using their professional judgement and should focus on providing a supportive environment to help staff improve practice in information sharing.

Where can I get more advice?

For more advice, and to download the publication *Information Sharing: Guidance for Practitioners and Managers*, visit: **www.dcsf.gov.uk/ecm/informationsharing**

In IT together

New technology can help bridge the divide between home and school. But don't forget to get the pupils involved

By **Lyndsay Grant** Illustration **Gary J Lucken**

Studies have shown that children's attitudes and actions are one of the strongest factors influencing the extent and nature of their parents' involvement in their school life and learning. Any strategy that aims to create successful relationships between home and school needs to consult with children and encourage them to initiate their parents' involvement.

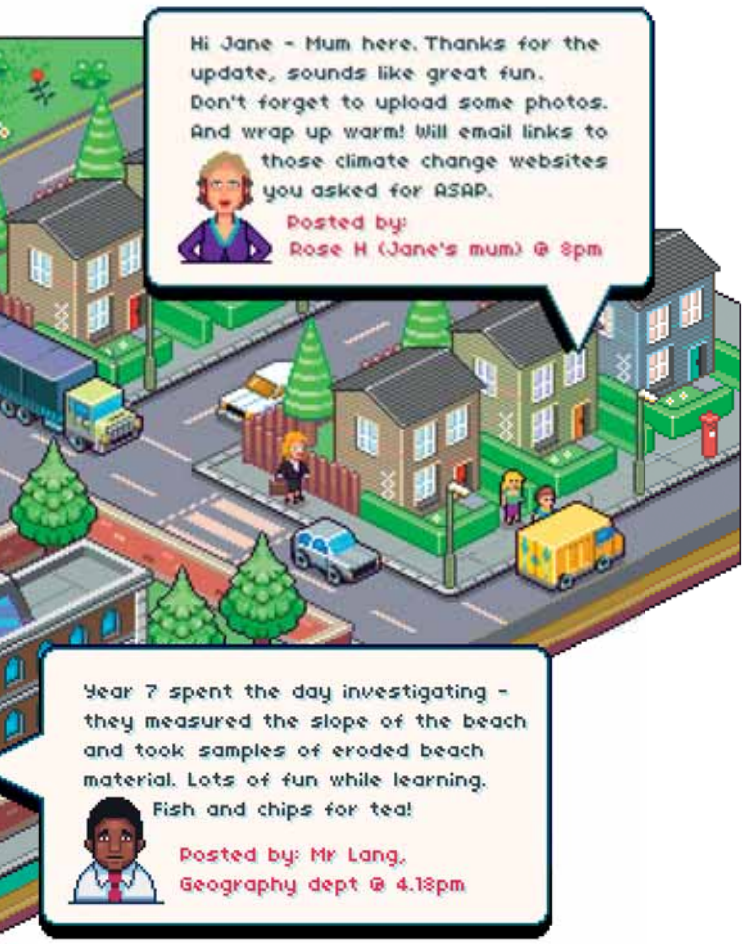
Children whose home cultures are similar to those at school benefit from the reinforcement of shared values and expectations, and they will generally find the transition between home and school easier to manage. Where there is less of an overlap between home and school cultures – which may be the case for children from working-class or minority ethnic families – children have a greater cultural 'distance to travel'. This is not to say that children's home cultures are somehow deficient if they don't strongly align with school. Indeed, parents can be engaged in children's learning in the home in ways that may not be visible to the school.

For these reasons, developing a working relationship between home and school is crucial if governors and teaching staff are to support children's learning in the broadest sense, and 'narrow the gap' between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers. Strategies that require parents to work in 'teacherly' ways are likely to prove counter-productive, and serve only to alienate families – depriving them of their confidence to support their children, and emphasising the divide between home and school.

Building a meaningful partnership can be challenging, because it requires a change in the power relationships between schools, teachers and children: putting young people at the centre of communications. Some schools are beginning to explore ways of using new technologies to make this happen, in an effort to enhance home-school relationships. This is particularly relevant at a time when schools are moving towards meeting the requirements for online reporting of data on pupil progress, behaviour, SEN and attendance for primary schools in 2012 and secondary schools in 2010. Greater transparency of data is to be welcomed, but to translate this into better home-school relationships, parents and children need to know how to interpret and act on the information provided. In order to address this issue, Cardinal Wiseman Catholic Technology College in Birmingham, for example, gives guidance to parents on how to use the data to help with their children's education. While many schools use texts to alert parents about school absences, one secondary in Cambridge has seen significant results from sending positive messages home about children – giving parents something to praise children for at home rather than communicating only 'bad news'.

> "Consult with children and encourage them to initiate their parents' involvement"

And a primary school in Sheffield gets children to create photo stories about what they've been up to during the day at school, and plays these on screens in the playground so that parents can see what's been happening



when they come to pick up children. Other schools have used weblogs to allow children to blog about their experiences at school and on residential trips, and allowing parents to comment. A 2007 study into the use of tablet PCs for primary numeracy suggested that giving access to rich, multimedia resources at home (via the mobile devices) bolstered children's confidence and enhanced parental understanding of what was being taught.

But school governors will need to do more than simply enable access to digital technology. The most successful examples of using ICT to link home and school are those where the school already works closely with children's homes and families. So changes need to be embedded within a school's improvement strategies – requiring an overall shift in policy and perspective, and therefore a clear and sustained direction from governors.

In order to use technology to connect home and school, governors need to consider how this may play out with the unequal power relationships and differences between school and home, otherwise inequalities are likely to be reinforced instead of overcome. When used in the right way, however, technology offers the possibility of a virtual 'third space', where children themselves are able to bring together and connect aspects of their lives and learning.

Lyndsay Grant is a learning researcher at Futurelab, and the author of Children's Role in Home-School Relationships and the Role of Digital Technologies, *which can be downloaded from: www.futurelab.org.uk*

Inbox

Got something to say? Write to *Governors*, John Brown, 136-142 Bramley Road, London W10 6SR or email governors@governorsnewsletter.co.uk (Letters may be edited.)

WINNING LETTER

Dear Editor

As a newly appointed governor at my daughter's school, I found your Focus on community cohesion (Autumn 2009) inspiring. I agree, schools are an integral part of the communities they serve, and I think children, their parents and the wider community should gain a better understanding of each other, which can only be a good thing.

Learning about diversity and working together is a positive step that bodes well for the future of the community as a whole. But it also provides an opportunity for the community to become involved with the school – whether they have children at that school or not – and be a part of the education of children.

Julie Phillips, LA governor, The Captain Webb Primary School, Dawley, Telford, Shropshire

Dear Editor

Although Ofsted's no-notice, or very short notice, inspections may have proved unpopular with all concerned, James Cassidy's comments (Inbox, Autumn 2009) highlight the reasons why high-quality governor training should include a solid induction process for each new governor. Any governor, not just the chair or vice chair, would then be sufficiently competent to be interviewed by an Ofsted inspector. Given the demanding role of today's governor, we have to be well organised and business needs to be conducted professionally. When that happens, Ofsted is welcome any day of any week – and governors will relish the experience.

Carolyn Choudhry, clerk and former governor, Bedfordshire

Dear Editor

Pupils and staff at our school have caught the gardening bug since taking part in the Morrisons Let's Grow scheme last year. Children have been growing vegetables on the school grounds, using the equipment gained by collecting the Morrisons vouchers. They have also been working on a nearby allotment. Parents, grandparents and governors have been involved, taking children to the allotment. The vegetables are given to the school kitchen, where the cook turns them into fabulous dishes for the whole school to enjoy. Seeing their produce on the school menu helps pupils to understand the full cycle – from sowing to growing, to harvesting, to cooking, to eating!

Tanya Devereux, governor, St Cuthbert's RCVA Primary School, Crook, County Durham

WIN! Write in to win £50 in book tokens

The writer of the Winning Letter in the Summer Term issue of *Governors* will win £50 worth of book tokens from Amazon. The Editor's decision is final.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

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.

Photography: Getty Images

Governors Communications Directorate, Marketing and Channels

Managing Editor, Communications Directorate Derek Carpenter **For enquiries regarding the Department for Children, Schools and Families,** call 0870 000 2288. ***Governors* is published on behalf of the DCSF by John Brown. Editor** George Theohari **Designer** Sarah Tang **Group Account Director** Chris Dicey
John Brown, 136-142 Bramley Road, London W10 6SR www.johnbrownmedia.com Tel: 020 7565 3000

Double vision

Ex-teacher Spyros Elia has been chair of governors at Brindishe Primary School in Lewisham for the last 17 years, and at Brindishe's partner school, Hither Green, for two. He was recently named the DCSF Governor of the Year

By **Carrie Dunn**

What made you want to be a governor?
I spent my professional career in the secondary state sector. I wanted to volunteer as a school governor because I think it's very important to give back. I arrived in this country with my family from Cyprus in 1958, and any success I've had has been through education. It's a privilege to enable children to get the best opportunities available.

What are the main differences between the primary and secondary sector?
Primary is more important, if it's possible to say that. It's a child's first experience of education – their first chance to build up their self-esteem.

How much of your time do you spend at the schools?
I meet with the headteacher once a week as a minimum. It can be formal or informal, or just a quick update. Sometimes she needs someone to bounce ideas off, or just let off steam. It's a big time commitment.

Do you think your background in teaching has helped you to be a good governor?
Absolutely. It means we're all talking and understanding the same language.

What are the key challenges you've faced?
When the schools set up a partnership, Brindishe had been rated outstanding in its last three Ofsted inspections, while Hither Green had been through a rough patch. My main concern was to make sure Hither Green children got the best educational provision possible. We've found that both school communities have progressed as relationships have developed between governors, SMTs, teachers, pupils and parents. Now we want to consolidate and keep improving. The success of these ventures depends on the people involved, and I think it's a real credit to the executive headteacher Vicki Paterson, and both of the school communities, that the pupils are now getting the best provision possible.

What areas would you like to see covered in future issues of *Governors*?
Email ideas to:
governors@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

Looked-after children

■ Governing bodies are now required to appoint a designated teacher to promote the achievement of looked-after children. **www.governornet.co.uk/rolesandresponsibilities**

School staffing

■ New regulations introduce a duty on governing bodies to ensure heads comply with, and benefit from, entitlements in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document. **www.governornet.co.uk/staffingandpersonnel**

Impartial Careers Education

■ This publication gives advice on how to meet the statutory duty in relation to careers education and ensure that young people receive the support they need. **www.governornet.co.uk/publications**

GovernorLine
08000 722181

Need help and advice?
GovernorLine is a free advice service 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**

■ Like more copies? **Call 0845 602 2260** (and quote reference 01118-2009MAG-EN).

Photography: Katie Hyams