

Come in and meet...
the Governor of the Year

Learning Curve
“How we survived special measures”

Get smart on uniforms
Warning over pricey school clothes



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Governors

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

Managing your team

Governors are being urged to look at how changes to the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) can help them with the management of the workforce and succession planning.

The changes – introduced in January last year – offer more flexibility and choice over how individuals save and plan for retirement, including increased options for saving outside the main scheme and encouragement to consider pension planning from an earlier stage in their career.

Meeting needs

Outdated features of the scheme have been reformed, allowing arrangements to meet the needs

Changes to teacher pensions can help your staff planning, governors told

of workers and employers, to make the most of teachers' experience and expertise.

Managing the workforce

However, DCSF research has revealed that governors and teachers do not know enough about pension arrangements, prompting a call to stakeholders to take time to familiarise themselves with the TPS.

“The flexibilities also impact on employers,” a DCSF spokesman says. “Governors

should take time to understand how the pension scheme can help with the management of the workforce and succession planning.

“For example, the phased retirement option allows members, in agreement with their employer, to draw part of their pension while still working.”

More information »

For further details, including case studies, visit the TPS website at: www.teacherspensions.co.uk



And here's a good story...

This month marks the start of the National Year of Reading (NYR) – a major DCSF-funded initiative launched by Schools Secretary Ed Balls to boost children's love of books and to re-engage adults with storytelling.

The organisers say the NYR is a chance for schools to develop a whole-school reading culture, to target reluctant readers and develop further

links with parents. Schools can build their own reading schemes and also sign up for activities such as Reading Connects and the Summer Reading Challenge.

NYR events updates are available on the official website, or schools can contact their local NYR co-ordinators.

More information »

www.yearofreading.org.uk

IAG HELP

The DCSF has launched new quality standards on information, advice and guidance (IAG), to help ensure young people make the right learning and career choices, in order to succeed in work. The standards set out for schools, Connexions services and other learning providers what good quality IAG should consist of.

For more information about the standards to help your school provide high-quality IAG, visit: www.cegnet.co.uk

SCHOOLS CASH BOOST

Minister for Schools and Learners Jim Knight has announced the first ever three-year school funding settlement for every Local Authority in England for 2008-11.

Total revenue schools funding will be £38 billion in 2008-09; £39.8 billion in 2009-10, and £41.9 billion in 2010-11, an average year-on-year increase of two per cent.

NEW EXAM REGULATOR

The DCSF has announced plans to create a new, independent regulator of qualifications and tests, removing responsibility for regulation from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

A public consultation will set out more detailed proposals on governance, appeals, the operational relationship between the QCA and the new regulator, and the exact powers and responsibilities of both organisations.



The right to write

The third and final element in the Government's plan to boost the '3Rs' is a new programme of intensive support for writing in primary schools – Every Child A Writer.

The announcement of the new scheme comes as the DCSF prepares to begin the

national rollout of intensive support and one-to-one tuition in reading and maths: Every Child A Reader and Every Child Counts.

Every Child A Writer is still being developed and may offer support later in primary school than Every Child A Reader and Every Child

Counts, which are targeted at younger primary children, potentially reaching a greater number of pupils and teachers.

New guidance and training is also being made available this term for the first time to primary schools to support the teaching of writing for six-, eight- and 10-year-olds.

Speak out

Governors are being asked for their views on specialist provision for children with speech, language and communications needs. The 'call for evidence' is a key part of the independent review into speech and language provision, led by John Bercow MP – the first such review for seven years.

It will make recommendations on how the best provision can be mirrored in all areas, so every child with speech and language difficulties gets support as early as possible. The review will also advise on how local services can work closer together.

The review's website is now online (see below), with a list of questions for the call for evidence. The closing date for adding your views to the consultation is 18 January 2008. The final report will be published in the summer.

[More information »](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/bercowreview)
www.dcsf.gov.uk/bercowreview

Smart rules for uniforms



Schools should make every effort to limit the cost of school uniforms or they could risk enforcement action, according to new advice from the DCSF.

The guidance, which was published after a three-month consultation, urges all schools to have a school uniform, but warns that any set policy

must be affordable, non-discriminatory and sensitive to the needs of pupils.

In particular, the guidelines warn that schools that have exclusive contracts with suppliers may be subject to enforcement action under the terms of the Competition Act.

Overly expensive uniform policies may also fall foul of the School Admissions Code, which places a statutory duty on all governing bodies to ensure that their policies and practices do not disadvantage any children.

[More information »](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/atoz/u/uniform)
www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/atoz/u/uniform

First-class contest

Nominations for the next round of the Teaching Awards are now open – and you have until midnight on 1 March to put forward a member of staff or fellow governor for a prize. There are 12 categories covering individual and whole-school nominations in 2008, including the DSCF Award for School Governor of the Year and the DCSF Award for Sustainable Schools.

www.teachingawards.com

Children's Plan revealed

Schools Secretary Ed Balls has announced plans to make children better educated by 2020. With a pledge to make Britain the best place in the world for children to grow up, he revealed measures to improve life in and out of school for young people. Among them are:

- A review of the primary

curriculum to make more space for reading and maths

- Foreign language teaching for all primary pupils
- A target of 90 per cent of children achieving five GCSEs at A*-C by 2020
- More extended schools
- All new teachers to work towards an MA

[More information »](#)

www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/childrensplan

LEARNING CURVE

Commitment that counts

Governors may sometimes feel theirs is a thankless task, but the experience of Kenn C of E Primary School proves the point that strong, committed governors are critical to driving school improvement. This Devon primary bears little resemblance to the school it was two years ago, when it was placed in special measures by Ofsted. Now Kenn is riding high following a glowing report from inspectors last summer that praised every aspect of school life as good or better – including governance, which was judged to be outstanding after developing rapidly.

Not unusually, major changes in personnel coincided with and followed Kenn's placement in special measures in November 2005. "Within a very short space of time we had a new acting headteacher, a high proportion of temporary teaching staff due to illness and a significant change in the governing body," recalls Sarah Stevenson (on right in picture), a new governor at the time and now chair since September.

The Local Authority offered extensive support, including an experienced governor who helped the governing body become, as Sarah puts it, "fit for purpose as quickly as possible". She adds: "Combined with an enthusiastic and determined new chair, and a passionate and confident governing body, changes in the school soon became evident."

Governors were left in no doubt as to their role and responsibilities, says Sarah. Each one was given an existing, experienced governor as a mentor, and attendance on relevant governor training was not optional. For governors to fulfil their duties and support the school, they must have the



confidence to question, she says. "Governors need to take a lead and not be afraid to ask for assistance if it is needed."

Structural change to Kenn's governance also supported rapid improvement, with a new 'action plan monitoring committee' established to track progress on a monthly basis. Matthew Shanks, chair of governors throughout the intense period of school improvement, believes that opening communication with all stakeholders, particularly parents, was critical. "I had a lot of open meetings," he explains. "Giving parents a forum without an agenda shows the school is not afraid to talk. Staff also had to feel they could talk to governors."

Sarah feels communication is the most important factor for a productive relationship between the headteacher

and governors. "Without clear and effective communication, a school cannot possibly achieve its full potential."

Headteacher Jo Evans (on left in picture) says Kenn's governors are better informed and more active than before, and there is a sense of shared leadership among

them. "Now I have a governing body that has really carved out its teams and worked out the areas of responsibility, with particular people taking particular leads. There

are at least three or four people I meet with before each governing body meeting."

Jo quotes her chair, Sarah, as describing school governance as a "get-your-hands-dirty" kind of role: "I've sometimes said: 'I always remember that governors are volunteers.' My chair says: 'Yes, but we chose to be governors.'"

"STAFF HAD TO FEEL THEY COULD TALK TO GOVERNORS"



Workplace safety prize

A new award in Workplace Hazard Awareness from the British Safety Council will give formal recognition to the health and safety knowledge that a young person learns during work experience.

The award, which covers everything from assessing fire risks to learning about repetitive strain injury, has

been launched to help keep 14- to 19-year-olds healthy and safe while they're in the workplace – currently, one young person is injured every 40 minutes.

Registration for the award is free for the 2007-08 academic year and to date, more than 850 schools have signed up. www.britishsafetycouncil.co.uk

RESOURCES

FIRE GUIDE

A new guide to help ensure schools are safer and better protected than ever before from the risk of fires has been published by the DCSF.

Building Bulletin 100, Design for Fire Safety in Schools will help school designers and fire safety officers take the right steps to ensure new school buildings give pupils and staff the highest protection.

It can be purchased in hard copy from RIBA (www.ribabookshops.com) or downloaded for free from: www.teachernet.gov.uk/fire

FOOD POLICY

The National Governors' Association, working in partnership with the Food Standards Agency, has published the second edition of *Food Policy in Schools – A Strategic Policy Framework for School Governing Bodies*.

It provides guidance to help governing bodies develop food policies for their schools and advice on tackling all aspects of school food, from lunches to vending machines.

Download free from: www.nga.org.uk/gdncedocs.aspx

SCHOOL AID NETWORK

School Aid Network is a charity that encourages UK schools to help communities abroad affected by natural disasters.

Its work began in 2005, in response to the Asian tsunami, when it co-ordinated fundraising for 3,000 schools and secured £1.4 million for relief. The charity has connected schools with the needy as far afield as Bangladesh – offering curriculum-linked fundraising.

Visit: www.schoolaidnetwork.co.uk

SUCCESSION BREEDS SUCCESS

Succession Breeds Success is a new resource to help governors create a culture where leadership can thrive.

It demonstrates how succession planning can open up the personal development opportunities for governors, while helping governing bodies ensure their future effectiveness, even when membership turnover is high.

Download free at www.ncsl.org.uk (type title in search box)

Show time

Two major exhibitions and conventions are taking place that governors may wish to attend.

The BETT education technology show (at London Olympia, 9 to 12 January), is focused on the use of ICT in schools, from subject-specific programs to whole-school solutions such as attendance tracking software.

The Education Show (NEC Birmingham, 28 February to 1 March) features a range of resources including hands-on learning toys and games.

www.bettshow.com
www.education-show.com

He's a champ

John Stannard, a former Director of Literacy Strategy and HM Inspector of Schools, has been named as the new National Champion for the Young Gifted and Talented (YG&T) programme, which nurtures the abilities of the most able children.

His first priority will be to target the 300 secondary schools that still do not identify any gifted and talented pupils, so that all schools have in place extra provision to cater for their needs.

INFORMATION

■ www.governor.net.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

Anti-bullying mentor scheme

Schools Secretary Ed Balls has announced a £3 million cash boost for 'peer mentoring pilots' to help prevent children from being bullied and to support those who are bullied. The schemes work by training pupils to be mentors. They will be taught by experts to resolve conflict, offer support, help pupils to make friends and report bullying to teachers. This will not, of course, be a substitute for disciplinary sanctions from teachers.



LEGISLATION

A matter of faith

The DCSF has issued a new document that outlines the role of faith schools in the wider school system. It sets out the commitment to continue to work together with all schools to contribute to a just and cohesive society. Faith in the System has been endorsed by the DCSF and by umbrella organisations representing the five faiths with schools in the maintained sector (or approved to open in the maintained sector) in England: Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Hindu. www.dcsf.gov.uk and type document title into search box

Pupil referrals

New regulations will make it mandatory for Local Authorities to have established statutory management committees for their PRUs by 1 February 2008.

The DSCF has published two new documents to help management committees deal with the new guidance. *Guidance on Management Committees for Pupil Referral Units – Constitution and Roles and Responsibilities* explains the role of statutory management committees and how they should be constituted. *Guidance on the Procedures for the Operation of Management*

Committees for Pupil Referral Units sets out procedures for management committees. It covers the appointment of members, disqualification of members, and the meetings and procedures of management committees. **Download at:** www.governornet.co.uk – under 'Recent additions'

Surplus revenue

The Government has decided not to implement a proposal to require Local Authorities to redistribute locally five per cent of all surplus revenue balances. The move follows a consultation on the draft school finance regulations, when schools expressed concern about the retroactive aspect of the proposal (which meant that five per cent of balances at 31 March 2007 would be redistributed in 2008-9).

There were also concerns about the definition of balances, such as whether partnership funding held by one school or the proceeds of fundraising would be included in the redistribution.

But in a letter to schools, DCSF head of school funding Stephen Kingdom stressed the Government was concerned over the growth of the national total of schools' revenue balances, and that it would monitor the situation over the next three years.

FOCUS ON...

Support staff

What is the Government doing to ensure support staff are rewarded for the work they do?

The National Agreement on school remodelling brought about changes to teachers' contracts, helping them to refocus on teaching and making a difference to their workload. These changes were achieved by deploying more support staff in schools and developing new roles with a broader range of responsibilities.

Support staff play a crucial role in raising standards in schools. In recognition of this, the increasing numbers of support staff and the various and often inconsistent practices adopted in relation to their pay and grading, the Minister of State for Schools invited representatives of support staff unions and employers – including the Foundation and Aided Schools' National Association (FASNA) – to establish a Support Staff Working Group (SSWG).

What is the SSWG discussing?

The Minister asked the group to identify, and report on, options to achieve a more strategic framework for the development of support staff roles, pay and terms and conditions in all maintained schools. He then gave the group a remit to focus on the option of setting up a new negotiating council for support staff, and on any wider impact of such a move.

What would a council do?

The council's remit would be to: develop a method to provide a nationally consistent approach to support staff employment matters with school-level flexibility; provide a framework for all schools to use when determining support staff pay and conditions in the same way that the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document does for teachers;

and issue guidance and advice on all support staff employment and pay matters.

When will the council be established?

The Minister has announced September 2008 as the target date for the introduction of the council. In the meantime, from January 2008, the process to appoint an independent person to chair the council will begin and a 'shadow body', consisting of the members of the SSWG, will continue with the technical discussions, including working on the detail of what the new framework might look like. It is likely that the membership of the council will reflect the current membership of the SSWG.

To read the full article and find out what these developments might mean for your school, visit: www.governornet.co.uk

Hadrian's call

How determined governors and staff answered the need to turn a school into a centre of excellence for SEN training

It has involved a huge amount of work, but after a challenging two-year programme of change, Hadrian School has become a centre of excellence for SEN training. “It has been wonderful as everyone has pulled together. I have never had anyone say: ‘I am too busy.’ If it is for our children, there’s never any hesitation,” says Pat Collins, vice chair of governors and chair of the extended services committee at this special school in Newcastle upon Tyne. The programme, which has put adult education at the core of its extended services, has been, in Pat’s words, “hugely successful in upskilling staff and parents”.

The programme’s other main aim was to raise money to fund its after-school clubs and to enhance the extensive school curriculum activities. “There has been some government funding, which is due to come to an end, but the children at our school have very complex needs and it is an expensive business to provide after-school clubs,” says Pat.

The extended services will enable Hadrian to continue to fund and run these, but there is still a need to smooth out transport arrangements. “We need to generate enough income to pay drivers to support after school transport. The more money we make, the more we can provide in terms of club coaches, staffing and a range of activities.”

Powerful governance

Hadrian, commended by Ofsted in September 2007 for its “powerful governance and visionary leadership”, is a primary school for three- to 11-year-olds. It takes up to 125 children with profound and multiple learning and cognitive difficulties, with half of these pupils eligible for free school meals. Pat, who has worked in special needs for more than 30 years, came up with the idea of offering accredited adult education classes to fund the after-school clubs.

“I had been writing courses for people working with children with special needs and had been getting them accredited. Our first course we had accredited was the Rebound Therapy one devised by our acting head, Chris Rollings. He is a national expert on it. We sent it off to an awarding body and got it accredited – we never looked back. It’s now nationally oversubscribed,” says Pat. The school is hoping to pilot a Level 3 course in



“It has been wonderful as everyone has pulled together. I have never had someone say that they were too busy”

support for children and young people with autism in 2008. This has been written with the staff of their partnership school, Thomas Bewick School. This year it is offering a new Level 3 OCN (Open College Network) in health support for children and young people. “An increasing number of children with physical difficulties are being educated in mainstream schools, so this new qualification will help support assistants working with these children.”

Secrets of success

The school already offers an NVQ Level 2 course for SEN classroom assistants and plans to offer a course for clerks to governing bodies. “The governors on the whole were very pro the extended services when we proposed the programme, although there were some who were reluctant as they didn’t know what the benefits would be. Getting to where we are today has been a huge process. We had to get in financial



help and set up a company, Hadrian Education and Development Service (HEADS), to run the financial side and we had to think about marketing and advertising. The programme's success is down to great governors, the Leadership Team, and a fantastic team of teachers and assistants." And Hadrian has a long-standing, hard-working chair of governors, Besh Brown, who received an MBE for services to governance over the last 35 years.

Visionary leadership

To set up extended services like those at Hadrian School, you need strategic leadership, says Pat: "Our headteacher at the time, Liz Turnbull, is quiet and reflective and her genius lay in her skills of delegation. She watched the governors and teachers and played to their strengths."

Consultation is vital and a lot of time was spent talking to parents, carers and pupils. The 15-member governing body has a strong committee structure. There are four committees with responsibility for: staffing, resources and planning; curriculum and performance; premises, health and safety, and extended services.

More information »

www.hadrian.newcastle.sch.uk

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

At a parents' evening we conducted a recruitment drive for a parent governor and I heard women say: "My husband would like to be involved, it's just the time consideration." When I said: "How about you?" the double takes were almost comical. I understand that reaction. As a stay-at-home mother for many years, I too lost confidence. But the respect shown towards governors is a boost to people's confidence and I've seen women grow in this role. They come to a realisation of their life skills which, with their commitment, bring such benefit to their schools.

Lucy Flannery

Parent governor, Bosmere Junior School, Havant, Hants

Dear Editor

The description of the new Exclusion Policy in *Governors* (Autumn Term issue) is misleading. It says it makes "parents keep their children indoors for the first five days of exclusion..." I believe that anything so draconian would be a breach of the Human Rights Act, being effectively imprisonment without trial. The correct position is that parents are required to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during school hours on the school days for which they are excluded, without justification.

Sarah McKimm

Governor, Southwark, London

Dear Editor

Every school governor is interested in saving a school money, so it was a useful set of bullet points that were included in the 'Profit from planning' article in the Autumn 2007 issue of *Governors*.

However, I feel I need to respond against the last bullet 'Get Technical'. As the ICT governor for our school, I have spent significant time reading Becta reports, and also reports produced by other interested organisations. Becta makes a very strong case for schools considering Open Source Software. The trouble is that there is a reluctance to

consider anything other than Microsoft for operating systems and office suites. So use the Becta information to educate yourselves and see what you could save.

Learn more about Open Source Software, by visiting: www.openschoolsalliance.org

David Le Hunte,
Governor, Yeovil, Somerset

To read more letters, visit »

www.governornet.co.uk/governorsletters

WIN!

The writer of the Best Letter in the Summer Term issue of *Governors* will win a beautiful £120 Cross Townsend ballpoint pen in a stunning platinum plate finish with exquisite diamond-pattern engraving.

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www.cross.com for more stylish pens, watches and leather accessories

CROSS

TERMS & CONDITIONS

1. Prize subject to availability.
2. Prize must be taken as offered, is not transferrable 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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What areas would you like to see covered in future issues of *Governors*?
Email ideas to:
research@governorsnewsletter.co.uk

Governor of the Year

Lynette Kirk was named Governor of the Year in the North of England after 18 years as a governor at Belle Vue Girls' School in Bradford, and won Governor of the Year at the national teaching awards. Lynette, a chair since 2003, was chosen for a commitment to creating good relationships between pupils, governors and the community.



Why did you decide to become a governor?

When work experience students from Belle Vue came in to the advice centre where I'm the manager, one of the teachers supervising the students suggested I put myself forward as a community governor. As chair, I am now more involved in decision making. I go into the school once a week to meet with the head and anyone else who wants to speak to me.

What are the particular challenges of your school?

We draw a lot of pupils from inner-city Bradford and serve a large Asian community. We take lots of steps to get the community involved in school life. The school has been the lead partner in the newly built community sports centre on campus. It is now run by a steering committee that includes representatives from other schools, local sports teams and the council – we make sure the finances are in order and everything runs smoothly.

What has been your proudest achievement as a school governor?

I've been involved in making links between Belle Vue and a school in Shanghai. I was visiting the school in China where my daughter is a teacher. I got talking to the

principal and we decided that it would be beneficial for both schools to work together. We now have a teacher exchange programme and would love to have a student exchange. The girls would love to go over there, and have enjoyed our presentations showing the different student life in China.

How do you forge good relationships with students?

We have a school council, but have taken it a bit further by putting three sixth-form students on the board as associate governors. We have a view from parents, a view from staff and now we have a view from our biggest stakeholders – the students. They are very vocal in the meetings and we like to hear from them.

Is there any crossover between your work as a governor and your professional life?

I would say to anyone who is thinking of becoming a governor that it can be tremendously beneficial for your career. As governors at our school, we set ourselves targets of going on three training courses per year. I've done courses on recruitment and selection that have really helped with my work at the advice centre.

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

Guideline help

■ New guidance outlines how schools can contribute towards community cohesion and helps them implement the duty to promote cohesion, coming into effect this year.

Linking up

■ FE colleges can now collaborate formally with the governing bodies of maintained schools or other FE institutions through joint committees - under Section 166 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Revised framework

■ See GovernorNet for details of the revised framework of professional standards for teachers, published by the Training and Development Agency.



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 susie.fisher@a2i.co.uk**

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