



GST Newsletter

Issue 6 – February 2024

Introduction

Welcome back to the second half of the Spring Term, we hope you all managed to have a lovely break.

School governors/trustees are the biggest volunteer force in the country and if you are not aware there is a National School Governors Awareness Day on 29 February 2024. **Get involved - National School Governors' Awareness Day - 29/02/2024** (schoolgovernorsday.co.uk).

News/updates

As well as the Department for Education (DfE) **School Governance** update, below are further items which may be of interest:

Working together to safeguard children (WTTSC)

Further to the DfEs update to the WTTSC guidance in December, The National Society for the Protection of Children have produced a **summary of the changes**, which governors/trustees may find useful/informative.

Working together to improve school attendance

As part of DfEs drive to improve school attendance they have launched a **Major national drive to improve school attendance** and national communications campaign, '**Moments matter, attendance counts**'.

The campaign runs from January through to March 2024, outlining how good attendance links directly to attainment, wellbeing, development as well as signposting to advice for further support.



Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)

Ofsted delayed the start of 2024 inspections until 22 January 2024, whilst training for lead inspectors was implemented. Ofsted has released a recording of the first training session, which is available to view on their **Ofsted YouTube channel: Ofsted's all inspector mental health awareness training - 8 January 2024 (youtube.com)**

DfE have also sent a **response** to the regulation 28 prevention of future deaths report, following Ruth Perry's inquest, to the coroner.

Education Select Committee report findings on Ofsted inquiry

National Governance Association's (NGA) Deputy Chief Executive, Sam Henson spoke to the committee in October, sharing data and insight from the views and experiences of those governing in schools and trusts.

In response the Education Select Committee has said that Ofsted "must ensure inspectors are engaging with governors and trustees and governance is sufficiently covered final inspection reports". The Committee set out several **recommendations** for the DfE and Ofsted to improve inspection practice and policy.

Ofsted's inspection handbooks

Ofsted's school inspection handbook and monitoring inspection handbook have been updated, including a '**Summary of changes**', in relation to how inspectors respond to leaders showing signs of distress and the ways in which inspectors will engage with wellbeing of leaders generally.

The handbooks also now include a new section providing clarity on the **pausing policy**. The policy sets out the processes that should be followed in the event that inspectors pause an inspection or the school/responsible body requests for the inspection to be paused. Governing boards should familiarise themselves with this policy to understand when a pause to inspection is likely to be considered.

Ofsted statement for schools affected by Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC)

Updated guidance for inspecting education settings still affected by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

Workload reduction taskforce publish initial recommendations

As part of the Government's ambition to reduce working hours for leaders' and teachers within three years, the DfE has announced new measures including an investment of £1.5 million and a series of initial recommendations from the workload reduction taskforce. This includes confirmation that the DfE will be removing performance related pay from September 2024 and replacing it with a "less bureaucratic way" to manage performance.

The taskforce recommendations also include a proposal for the DfE to amend guidance for governors and trustees to reflect that the "core function of strategic leadership includes consideration of staff workload and wellbeing".

DfE publish education staff wellbeing charter update

The DfE has released a progress report on their **education staff wellbeing charter**. First launched in 2021, it sets out joint commitments from the DfE, Ofsted and schools and trusts on actions they will take to promote and protect the wellbeing of staff.

Digital Standards Guidance Published

DfE has published **new guidance** on digital leadership and governance standards in schools. This covers all elements of digital technology, from physical IT assets to cyber security and digital licenses and subscriptions.

Three recommendations for governing boards include:

- Boards should “consider” assigning a digital link role to a particular governor or trustee.
- Risk management plans need to include digital risks, ie data breaches/cyber attacks etc. These plans will then be scrutinised by the board.
- The creation of a digital strategy plan to be reviewed annually – the board providing challenge and support as part of their strategic remit.

Mobile phones in schools

The DfE have updated their Mobile phones in school: guidance. This guidance explains how to develop, implement and maintain a policy that prohibits the use of mobile phones in school. It should be read alongside the guidance on:

- **Behaviour in schools**
- **Keeping children safe in education.**

Safer Internet Day 2024

Safer Internet Day was on 6 February 2024 with its theme of “Inspiring Change? Making a Difference, Managing Influence, and Navigating Change Online,”

The UK Safer Internet Centre has recently released an **exclusive collection** of short films, designed to captivate and educate children and young people aged 3 to 18 years old.

Online safety is essential so that pupils are safeguarded from potential harmful and inappropriate online material.

The latest version of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) (September 2023), contains updates that boards should be aware of, including:

- Ensuring that schools meet IT monitoring and filtering standards (para 142) , this includes DfE published filtering and monitoring standards:
 - Identify and assign roles and responsibilities to manage **filtering and monitoring systems**
 - Review filtering and monitoring provision at least annually
 - Block harmful and inappropriate content without unreasonably impacting teaching and learning
 - Have effective monitoring strategies in place that meet their safeguarding needs Governing boards should ensure their settings are meeting these standards
- Clarification that schools should inform shortlisted candidates of online searches (para 221)
- Signposting to cyber security standards (para 144)
- Further guidance relating to external organisations using school premises (para 167).

The board should ensure that the leadership team and relevant staff have an awareness and understanding of the provisions in place and manage them effectively.



Rollout of electric vehicle chargepoints to be accelerated

New measures to support electric vehicle drivers from the government's **Plan for Drivers** was launched on 5 February 2024, including grants for schools, cash for councils and new proposals to boost chargepoint numbers.

Development/Training

National Governance Association – Learning Link (NGA LL)

Westmorland and Furness Council are pleased to inform that they will be continuing funding free access to the NGA LL platform for the financial year 2024 to 2025. Please do take advantage of this fantastic resource to help build and enhance your boards existing skills and knowledge.

You will need to register to access the platform, if you have not yet registered, instructions of how to do this and a guide to the platform can be found in this flyer **here**.

There are a number of modules available, a full list of the current modules can be downloaded from **here**. New and updates to existing modules are added regularly ie Safeguarding (updated in line with KCSIE 2023), Safer Recruitment (new module).

NGA LL have announced another new module they have added for Local Governing Boards/Committees that are part of a Multi Academy Trust:

Introduction to local governance module. Local Governance is a unique challenge that many people are still getting to grips with. This module will help you navigate the challenges of governing in a local setting, explaining how the local tier fits into a broader trust structure, the roles and responsibilities of governors on academy committees, and more essential tips and guidance. You can find the module under the Structures, Roles and Responsibilities category on the platform.

NGA LL are also in the early stages of creating modules around handling complaints and cyber security, when these are released, we will let you know.

Sometimes, the biggest challenge can be where to start!

NGA LL have provided a suggested pathway covering a governance year, that may help with your development journey. They have separate pathways for the following roles:

- **Maintained school governors**
- **Multi Academy Trust Trustees**
- **Local academy committee/Local governing board members**

Governance – Role of the Chair, Developing Leadership

The Governor Support Team (GST) are delivering the above session (virtually). This session provides delegates with a greater understanding of the role of the chair in leading the governing board to fulfil its strategic responsibility in delivering effective governance.

It will also consider ways in which to strengthen the team to lead to effective succession planning.

The event will consist of a presentation followed by an opportunity to ask questions.

The dates are:

- 27 February 2024
- 11 June 2024

All sessions will run from 6.00pm – 7.30pm. Bookings are made via **Westmorland and Furness SLA online**.

Governance Professional (GP)/Clerk Cluster Session

The GST are also delivering a virtual session for GP/clerks. This session will consist of the following:

- Ofsted – ‘First impressions count’
- Opportunity to share experiences of inspections from a GP/clerks perspective
- Opportunity to ask questions around any aspects of the role of GP/Clerks.

There are no restrictions on numbers, the more the merrier, details for the session are as follows:

- 12 March 2024, 5pm to 6.30pm
- **Click here to join the meeting**
- Please email GST.Mailbox.WAF@cumbria.gov.uk to confirm attendance.

School to school support

Further to our article 'School to School Support' previously, the GST wish to remind any governors/trustees who feel they may be in a position to provide governance support to other boards on a voluntary basis, to contact the GST for an informal conversation.

We would like to extend this invite to include clerks (governance professionals).

Please contact either your Governor Support Assistant or drop an email to GST.mailbox.WAF@cumbria.gov.uk to discuss further or if you would just like a little bit more detail.

GST Contact Details

The GST continues to offer advice, support, and guidance, specific to your boards needs and can be contacted as follows:

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