



Welcome back to a new academic year! We hope governors/trustees have managed to take some time to enjoy a summer break and recharge batteries.

Headteachers and staff will be feeling the pressure which comes with starting a new school year. It is critical that chairs make regular contact with their headteacher throughout the year. This might be a phone call, a virtual meeting or face to face or a mixture of all three. Your support and duty of care to your headteacher can and should make a significant difference to their wellbeing.

## News/Updates

The Department for Education (DfE) regularly share School Governance updates which provide important news and communications relating to governance in maintained schools and academy trusts in England. The latest release contains updates around the white paper and SEND green paper, updated guidance on education recovery support etc.

As well as the School Governance update, below are further items listed on the DfE website which may be of interest:

- **Keeping Children Safe in Education** statutory guidance comes into effect September 2022. It is recommended governors, especially Safeguarding governors, sign up to the **Cumbria Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP) e-newsletters** which give regular local and national safeguarding updates along with notification of learning opportunities and training courses.
- **School suspensions and permanent exclusions**, guidance on the suspension and permanent exclusion of pupils from Local Authority maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units.

## Training

The Learning Improvement Service (LIS) continue to provide all schools in Cumbria with access to the National Governance Association (NGA) NGA Learning Link e-learning modules, free of charge until **18 April 2023**.

In addition, the Governor Support Team are pleased to offer the following courses during the autumn term:

### Governance – Roles and Responsibilities

Governing boards are central to the effectiveness and accountability of schools. This short course, together with the NGA Learning Link suite of core modules covering key governance areas, will enable members of the board to become more familiar with their roles and responsibilities.

Sessions will be held on the following dates:

Monday 10th October 2022 – **Book here**

Tuesday 11th October 2022 – **Book here**

Wednesday 12th October 2022 – **Book here**

### Governance – Chairs Role, Developing Leadership

This session provides delegates with a greater understanding of the role of the chair in leading the governing board to fulfil its strategic responsibilities. It will also consider ways in which to strengthen the team to lead to effective succession planning.

Sessions will be held on the following dates:

Monday 21st November 2022 – **Book here**

Tuesday 22nd November 2022 – **Book here**

Wednesday 23rd November 2022 – **Book here**

*Due to demand this particular course is a repeat of the sessions held during the summer term.*

All sessions will be held from 6.00pm to 7.00pm and will take place on Microsoft Teams. To book a place on one of the courses please click on the hyperlink.

Places are limited to 30 delegates per session.

Each of the sessions will consist of a short presentation, after which will follow an opportunity for delegates to ask questions.

### Inspiring Governance – Recruitment Support

Are you looking for skilled volunteers to join your governing board this year?

Richard Ellam, Head of School and Trust Support for Inspiring Governance, is hosting a session to highlight the benefits of the Inspiring Governance recruitment platform. This session will also assist delegates in how to get the best from the platform and will be held on the following date:

The session will take place on Wednesday 21st September from 6.00pm to 7.00pm – **Book here**



## Governance – A new academic year

As we start a new academic year, for some boards this can mean a change of membership of boards, new governors/trustees, possibly a new chair, clerk/governance professional and you may even have a new headteacher. To assist us, it would be very helpful if you can update us with any changes to chairs and clerks/governance professional (school email) contact details so we can ensure all boards continue to receive our communications. GST contact details can be found at the end of this newsletter.

It is important that boards are built on strong foundations and are on a continuous cycle of development, to ensure effective governance. There are key principles and practices which contribute to outstanding governance practice and strengthens the leadership of the school. Below are four key practices, with links to the relevant NGA Learning Link modules for further professional development:

### Skills Audit

This continuous cycle begins with evaluating your board's current and future needs to build an effective team. A good place to start is with a skills audit. The recently updated **NGA skills audit** includes a video tutorial on how to undertake a skills audit.

### Recruitment

Recruitment of governors/trustees is the next stage. Most categories of governor/trustee have an eligibility category however, knowing what skill set the board already have, including any gaps, can help with the recruitment process and additionally identify what training is required to enhance the skill set of the board.

Boards need to utilise the networks that are available to them to source new governors/trustees, ie friends, work colleagues, voluntary groups, local business contacts/networks, advertise by displaying posters in local amenities ie libraries, post offices, shops, in fact any public notice board (**draft poster available on the GST website**). The NGA provide a **short film** as an introduction for anyone expressing an interest in becoming a governor/trustee.

The GST advise boards to register any eligible vacancies with **Inspiring Governance** and **Governors for Schools**. These sites provide resources that can be used both as part of the recruitment and with the induction of new governors/trustees. The websites also have details of individuals who have expressed an interest in contributing to the governance of schools and can provide a route of contact.

NGA Learning Link modules available:

- Working Together: Building the team and improving the organisation
- How to: support the recruitment, appointment and retirement of governors and trustees

### Understanding the role and responsibilities

Once a board has successfully recruited new board members, the next stage is to ensure a robust induction process for them.

In the **Cumbria Clerk's Handbook** (Appendix 3), the GST have provided a model appointment/ election letter, which includes information which may be useful as part of an induction to the board. It is recommended new board members are allocated a mentor to support them initially (usually for the first year), to provide ongoing support and information.

The GST recommend the adoption of the **NGA Code of Conduct**. This would be a good starting point for a mentor to talk through the expectations around commitment and behaviours with a new governor/ trustee.

Chairs/Vice Chairs may also use the code of conduct as part of the annual governor/trustee contribution review, as a tool to help boards and individuals develop their governance practice. The GST have also developed an addendum to the Code of Conduct, which provides some guidance around how to address any inappropriate behaviours if they occur. If you would like a copy of the addendum, either contact your Governor Support Assistant or email **GST@cumbria.gov.uk**.

**NGA Learning Link modules available:**

Structures, roles and responsibilities:

- Governance: your role, your responsibilities, your organisation
- The constitution of the governing body
- Governance of a church school
- Different models of governance
- Academies
- Governance visits to schools

**Succession Planning**

The NGA describes succession planning as ensuring continuity within an organisation, by having the right people in the right place at the right time. Looking at this in terms of effective governance, this means recruiting new governors/trustees and encouraging learning and development. To ensure continuity there are a few basic steps:

- Getting the basics in place
  - Recruitment needs to be proactive, looking well in advance (if possible) for any upcoming vacancies and making use of the networks/resources available to the board
- Establishing a culture of succession
  - Developing governors and trustees. Robust induction process, Code of Conduct outlining expectations, annual review of governor/trustee contribution, planning for lead roles such as Safeguarding, SEND etc and possible shadowing or as a minimum, a scheduled handover
  - Ensuring board leadership. Establishing a cycle of succession planning. Governors/trustees may be apprehensive about taking on a chairing role and perceive it to be daunting and unachievable, when put alongside their other commitments. Break down and clearly define the chair's role, delegate responsibility (with support from vice chair, as this is part of the vice chair's development), as well as tasks.

All governors/trustees need to feel as though they are contributing. To make this contribution, governors need to have support to develop their skill set. Governor/trustee continuous professional development helps with retention and contributes to effective governance ie ensuring the best outcomes for the children and young people in your schools.

The following **testimonies** are from two governors who have kindly shared, in their own words, how their governors' skills, knowledge and experiences developed over time.

**NGA Learning Link modules available:**

- Good governance – Succession Planning
- Safeguarding: The governor's role (recently updated to reflect the changes to KCSIE 2022)
- Pupil Success and Wellbeing: The Role of the SEND Governor

The next newsletter will be spotlighting Clerking; Ofsted; School to school support.

**Contact**

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

**Jane Lees** (Barrow, Copeland and South Lakes) E: jane.lees@cumbria.gov.uk M: 07768 027 244

**Faith Matthews** (part-time), (Allerdale, Carlisle and Eden) E: faith.matthews@cumbria.gov.uk M: 07384 825 941