

Dear Fellow Governors,

Since the last issue of the SGA Newsletter, the world of education has entered a new phase. We have a new Government with a different view of education and a burning need to cut public spending. It was always going to be tough but I don't think many people realised quite how tough it's going to be over the coming years. Some say we will have to endure utility measures for up to a decade.

Confederations and the delivery of extended services suddenly came to the fore in March so we were delighted to be able to mainstream this prickly issue at our Spring Conference. Mark Scarborough outlined Surrey's preferred strategy clearly and candidly as you will deduce from the write up on his presentation.

At the time of the conference, the new Government had only published its outline policy but the announcement concerning fast-tracking outstanding schools to Academy status rather took many of us by surprise. How or if this will dovetail with the existing Trust School programme remains to be seen. Even our speaker on May 22nd wasn't too sure where the Specialist Schools & Academies Trust stood with the new administration.

Add to this the announcement confirming that parents and other groups will have the freedom to open their own schools and we have a new landscape in education. Michael Gove's assertion that, "Teachers know how to run schools not bureaucrats or politicians. That's why this Government is committed to giving all schools greater freedom", may call into question the role of governors in these new organisations. I suspect, however, that the workload and responsibilities of governing bodies are likely to increase rather than decrease

Still, it's early days yet and it will take time for the new administration to 'bed in'. I nevertheless see much material for debate.

*Philip Miller, Chair, SGA*

## Goodbye DCSF; Hello DfE

Almost the first act of the new coalition government resulted in yet another change to the name of the Department responsible for schools - yes it's called the Department for Education. As the NGA commented, 'Hopefully, the change to the letterheads and logos will be done at minimal cost.' As far as we can tell, the remit of the Department remains the same, it still has responsibility for education, families and children's services.

The new Ministerial team is headed by Michael Gove MP – Secretary of State for Education and Member for Surrey Heath. Supporting him are:

- Nick Gibb MP – Minister of State for Schools
- Sarah Teather MP – Minister of State for Children and Families
- Tim Loughton – Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families
- Lord Jonathan Hill of Oareford CBE  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools

The new DfE website is still in its infancy but can be found at <http://www.education.gov.uk/>. At the moment the Home page carries what might be considered a disclaimer:

"A new UK Government took office on 12 May. As a result the content on this site may not reflect current Government policy. All statutory guidance and legislation published on this site continues to reflect the current legal position unless indicated otherwise."

## Governor Reps urgently needed for Surrey Schools Forum

School Governors are needed to serve as members of the Surrey Schools Forum. A statutory body, the Schools Forum has specific decision-making powers in relation to schools' formula funding and other finance matters. The Forum comprises 29 members including Headteachers, schools governors and representatives of diocesan councils, trades unions and other stakeholders. The term of office is 3 years. A total of 6 governors are required to sit on the forum as full members. In addition to this, formally nominated substitute members are also required for each phase. The following vacancies urgently need to be filled:

Vacancy	Type	(Full/ Sub)
<b>Commencing:</b> Special School Governor	1 FULL	Immediately
	1 SUB	Immediately
Primary School Governor	1 FULL	July 2010
	1 SUB	Immediately
Secondary School Governor	1 SUB	Immediately

School Governors are encouraged to submit expressions of interest to:

Sheila Danson - Administrator, SGA  
c/o Gordon's School  
West End, Woking, Surrey GU24 9PT  
email [surreygovernors@hotmail.com](mailto:surreygovernors@hotmail.com)

The deadline for expressions of interest is **Friday 25 June 2010**.

Further information relating to the Surrey Schools Forum can be found on the Surrey County Council Website: [www.surreycc.gov.uk](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk) (Select: Learning/ Teachers and Education Staff/ Schools & Learning),

or

by contacting **Lynn McGrady**, Head of Finance Schools & Learning, Surrey County Council on 0208 541 9212 or email [lynn.mcgrady@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:lynn.mcgrady@surreycc.gov.uk).

## Conference Reports

### Mark Scarborough, VT/Four S Senior Consultant for Extended Services Towards more effective partnership working



Mark Scarborough began by outlining the current situation with 23 confederations in Surrey to which £4.2 Million of funding was allocated with no accountability or overall governance. In future funding will only be released to confederations under the terms of a service level agreement. This will require the establishment of a management structure that includes governors along with other key stakeholders. He saw governors as an integral part of the future of confederations and is pressing for their inclusion in future development.

A reduction in funding will mean that money will have to be focused on targeted and preventative services and in narrowing the gap; a gap that in Surrey has widened. He told the meeting that children in receipt of free schools meals were entitled to lap tops together with funding to support their use and that currently 52% of eligible Surrey children had received them.

The need for effective partnership working to meet local need, with a seamless approach to information, was stressed by Mark. He said that the county was working towards a realignment of

11 confederations, but with continued working at cluster and individual school level. These confederations would then be grouped in line with the four quadrants of the Surrey Alliance, with which, it was hoped, more effective links would be developed. These plans had been discussed at four consultation events held in the county and subsequently revised as a result of comments received. A decision-making document was being produced and also a question and answer paper.

Mark advised governors to ensure that they had a voice in their local confederation and to cascade information down to their governing bodies. Where governors were not already actively involved, he advised approaching the confederation leader or manager with a request to set up a meeting for governors.

*Doris Neville-Davies*

### Philippa Walker, The Key Community Cohesion in Practice

After our last conference, when Doris Neville-Davies gave us a run through the requirements of Community Cohesion, there were many requests for practical examples of this. Philippa Walker, a researcher with 'The Key' initially gave a summary of the four main aspects of community cohesion - school, local community, UK community and global community - as well as the aspects that Ofsted looks at; religion, ethnicity & culture and socio-economic factors. She then covered numerous examples of community cohesion in action from across the UK. Some examples came from national education magazines, some from Teachernet or other online sources:



- Whitehouse Primary School in North Shields purchased a fire pit and invited families to tell stories round the campfire from their own experiences.
- Holy Trinity School in Guildford learned about World War II through conversations with residents in a local old people's home, and their own grandparents. They then invited everyone to a tea party to let them know about the project they had been engaged in.
- Newall Green High School in Manchester ran a community leadership programme for 16-19 year olds. They invited local primary schools to join their House system and ran parenting programmes. They received an outstanding judgement when Ofsted visited.
- Spring Grove School and Scholes J&I School, each with a totally different ethnic mix, ran a joint creative arts project over 10 weeks while staff also shared good practice.

They measured impact by interviewing the students who took part.

- Drayton Park Primary School in Islington has regularly run an International evening, sharing food from the multitude of countries their students come from. This year they asked parents from these countries to record on film their own school experiences and shared these at the open evening together with student performances. Parents subsequently interviewed felt more welcomed in the playground after this event.
- Durham Trinity School have supported projects in India and hosted teachers from other countries. They felt the need for a more cohesive approach to their global involvement and joined the Compass Project where they can share with other schools globally, as well as with local businesses.

Philippa offered governors steps for their schools to pursue:

- Audit what is currently happening and ensure evidence is being collected
- Look at the school's impact locally, review who the school engages with and identify gaps
- Create an action plan
- Evaluate the work being done and the impact it is having

She provided examples of possible Ofsted questions that could be asked of students, staff and governors during an inspection (taken from an HMI who presented at Community Cohesion conferences last year) and concluded that, while most schools are involved in the community at different levels, this work needs to be evidenced and its impact recorded for inspectors to review when they visit.

*Karen Stainsby*

**The Key** is an information and guidance service for school leaders, developed by the TDA and NCSL  
<http://www.usethekey.org.uk/>

## Alan Mills, TFSP Trust and Foundation Schools – What? Where? and why?

Alan Mills South East Regional Team Leader for Trust and Foundation Schools Partnership (TFSP) presented an overview to the meeting. The TFSP is contracted by the Department for Education to support schools that wish to take on trust or foundation status.

Throughout the country 65% of Trusts are secondary, 32% primary and 3% special schools. In the south east 81 schools are involved in 54 projects, 17 are shared trusts (more than one school) and 37 are single school trusts. There are currently 2 secondary school trusts in Surrey. Trust schools are foundation schools which retain funding and services and are treated in the same way as all local authority schools.

Alan explained how governance in Trust schools is different. Governors are the employer, the admitting authority and hold the land and assets on trust. The Trust is a separate entity from the Governing Body (which continues to exist) and is an incorporated charity, appointing some governors to the Governing Body. The Trust has partners as members, invited by the governing body, who may be from business, education, health or other voluntary organisations.

The aim of trust schools is to use experience, skills and expertise from other schools and professions to raise standards. The Trust enables access to wider networks and provides sustainable relationships with research and training opportunities. No financial contributions are required but the Trust also provides opportunities for access to charitable funds.

Further information may be found on the website:- [www.trustandfoundationschools.org.uk](http://www.trustandfoundationschools.org.uk) – see Information for Governors, Case Studies and Showcase Autumn 2009.

*Gill Walker*

## Governor Feedback on VT

When the joint venture between Surrey County Council and VTFourS was launched, a partnership board was set up, comprising members and officers of the county council, Headteachers, representatives of VT and one governor. I am your governor representative and I currently chair the board. At each termly meeting we give feedback on the services provided by VT. This is usually drawn from my own experiences and those of others who have contacted me. Each year I try to spread the net further and ask the SGA to send a message to all governors on its circulation list requesting feedback.

My latest email resulted in over 30 responses that I was able to include in my feedback to the partnership board meeting at the end of March. 24 contained very positive comments about the quality of governor training and the service received from governance consultancy. Several of these included suggestions for improvements such as a more advanced level of training for longer-serving governors; a wider range of trainers; more workshop-type training to allow an exchange of experiences.

The problem areas covered issues such as difficulties with the CPD online system; some school staff had problems accessing courses on areas they see as very important; some governing bodies felt a lack of support when dealing with difficult situations; insufficient governance of confederations; inconsistencies in advice given by different members of the personnel team.

Following a complaint lodged in one of these situations, I was told that developments had then been closely monitored by Amanda Fisher, the general manager. I have reported before on VT Four S's wish for people to use their compliments and complaints service and I was pleased to receive a response that provides an example of a complaint being dealt with promptly and professionally.

I am always happy to receive comments from governors to include in my feedback to the board. These can be sent to me via the SGA at: [surreygovernors@hotmail.com](mailto:surreygovernors@hotmail.com).

*Doris Neville-Davies*

## What is a link governor?

Although not a statutory requirement, most governing bodies have a link governor to act as a link between the school and local (education) authority (LA) to advise their governing body of training opportunities available and topical developments within governance. LAs such as Barnet, Gloucestershire, Thurrock, Birmingham and Buckinghamshire provide advice on link governors on their websites. Most LAs will provide you with their own local guidance.

Generally, you may be responsible for:

- helping the governing body identify its training needs;
- encouraging individual governors to attend training courses and report back to the governing body;
- providing relevant information to the governing body about training matters;
- becoming a link for training and development between the governing body and the LA;
- helping new governors settle in and make them aware of training opportunities provided by the LA and others;

- encouraging all governors to become involved in the work of the governing body and the school;
- attending termly meetings organised by (some) LAs for Link Governors, at which information will be given about available training and offering the opportunity to share ideas and experiences with other Link Governors.

*(Surrey sends a termly email briefing to Link Governors)*

For Surrey, go to <http://cpd.vtfours.co.uk/cpd/> and use the search option to find relevant courses. To book courses, register with the online system and follow instructions, or email to [coursebookings@vtplc.com](mailto:coursebookings@vtplc.com) with the details of when, where, what and which event code the course is (plus who you are & which school). If the school has a **VT Four S Governance SLA** there is no payment required (and authorisation is automatic).

If the school wished to keep track of courses completed by governors, this will be available for link governors from the online system at some point. Alternatively, get governors to copy you in on their email when they book a course.

*Karen Stainsby*

## Schools - the Headline priorities from the DfE website

- \* Promote the reform of schools in order to ensure that new providers can enter the state school system in response to parental demand.
- \* Give all schools greater freedom over the curriculum.
- \* Ensure all schools are held properly to account.
- \* Fund a significant premium for disadvantaged pupils from outside the schools budget by reducing spending elsewhere.
- \* Support Teach First, create Teach Now to build on the Graduate Teacher Programme, and seek other ways to improve the quality of the teaching profession.
- \* Reform the existing rigid national pay and conditions rules to give schools greater freedom to pay good teachers more and deal with poor performance.
- \* Simplify the regulation of standards in education and target inspection on areas of failure.
- \* Give anonymity to teachers accused by pupils and take other measures to protect against false accusations.
- \* Create more flexibility in the exams systems so that state schools can offer qualifications like the IGCSE.
- \* Reform league tables so that schools are able to focus on, and demonstrate, the progress of children of all abilities.
- \* Give heads and teachers the powers they need to ensure discipline in the classroom and promote good behaviour.
- \* Improve diagnostic assessment for schoolchildren, prevent the unnecessary closure of special schools, and remove the bias towards inclusion.
- \* Improve the quality of vocational education, including in creating flexibility for 14–19-year-olds and creating new Technical Academies as part of our plans to diversify schools provision.
- \* Keep external assessment, but review how Key Stage 2 tests operate in future.
- \* Ensure that all new Academies follow an inclusive admissions policy. We will work with faith groups to enable more faith schools and facilitate inclusive admissions policies in as many of these schools as possible.

## The NGA View...

The coalition government's agreement describes policy matters which cover schools under three different sections: the spending review, education and civil liberties. This is what it says under those various headings:

A significant premium for disadvantaged pupils will be funded from outside the schools budget by reductions in spending elsewhere.

The government agrees to promote the reform of schools in order to ensure that:

- new providers can enter the state system in response to parental demand
- all schools have greater freedom over the curriculum
- all schools are held properly accountable
- They will scrap the Contact Point database
- They will outlaw the finger printing of children at schools without parental permission

The Secretary of State set out his priorities in a message to his civil servants, which has been widely reported in the press. In his message he stated:

*“...So improving literacy, raising pupil attainment, extending parental choice, freeing teachers from bureaucracy, improving discipline and closing the widening gap between the richest and the poorest should be our shared goal...”*

*In the weeks ahead, I want us to offer all schools the chance to enjoy academy-style freedom so that heads and teachers across the country can be liberated. This will be the focus of the legislation we hope to bring forward later this month...”*

The coalition programme for Government is thirty pages long and split into various policy sections – the schools section can be found in Section 26 (page 28). The full programme can be downloaded from the following website:

<http://programmeforgovernment.hmg.gov.uk/>

The programme is fairly broad brush, in that it sets out the overall aims, but doesn't contain any specific details. For example, the so called 'free schools' are in there, but we still don't have any detail about the mechanisms for setting them up.

## VT/SGA Autumn Conference

Following the successful joint conference in November 2009, we are again working with VT Governance Services to arrange a programme of interest to all Surrey governors this Autumn.

The date has been set:

**Saturday November 20th**

The venue is Denbies English Vineyard near Dorking

Details of the venue, agenda and speakers will be published on the SGA website as they are finalised.

**nga** National  
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Association

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