

Dear Fellow Governors,

We held this issue of the SGA Newsletter over because of the delay in the Government Spending Review, the results of which were announced just before Christmas. Along with other Local Authorities, Surrey was unable to act on finance for schools and assess the impact on educational support services until the results were known.

All this left many schools in limbo. If the effective reduction in budgets was to be more than 2.5 percent, Academy status - particularly for secondary schools - looked an attractive option. Some felt that to go early - given the nod from the DfE - would at least remove the uncertainty and perhaps pay dividends.

However, if too many schools 'opt out', there will be insufficient funding for many if not most support services currently provided by the LA. All well and good if you are a big school with the staff and expertise to source and buy such services elsewhere but problematic for nearly all infant and primary schools.

In December, Michael Gove sent a letter to Heads and Governors outlining the government's strategy and priorities for finance. Surrey subsequently confirmed that funding levels will (should) not fall by more than 1.5% for the coming year. This effectively gives everyone a breathing space; time to look at the options. Surrey, a Conservative dominated council, can't be seen to discourage schools from following preferred Government policy. Nevertheless, Peter Martin's written response to Michael Gove

states Surrey's position clearly; they do not see the necessity for most schools to opt out.

There is still a great deal of concern and confusion amongst schools as to the appropriate course of action to take. To date only one Surrey school has 'gone' Academy. Some others - primary and secondary - are likely to follow during the year. Everyone else is waiting for further information and advice.

As Doris Neville-Davies pointed out at the November conference (see below), **Governors** are charged with making the decision for their school to become an Academy; not the Head; not the Parents although it is strongly advised to consult both. Read every piece of information from the DfE and from County. Go to meetings and seminars, consult LA officers, and talk to governors of schools that have gone or are going but also to those that have considered academy status and decided against. Make sure you fully understand the implications and advantages for your school, your pupils, your staff, and your parents. Then make your decision.

Philip Miller, Chair, SGA

SGA/Babcock 4S - Conference - November 20th Academies

Doris Neville-Davies - NGA South East Regional Director

Academies are independent state schools subject to the terms of their funding agreement and exempt charities. They are companies limited by guarantee, governed by an academy trust and governing body and are directly answerable to the Secretary of State.

Decision-makers

It is the GOVERNING BODY'S decision to become an academy - not the local authority, head, diocese and, throughout the conversion process, the governing body is in the driving seat not the DfE.

Consultation

The school should consult all relevant 'partners' (e.g. parents, staff, pupils, LA, feeder and other local schools, trustees/foundation body if applicable). The Act requires consultation before signing funding agreement but the NGA recommends consultation before applying.

Research

Thorough research to ascertain all the implications is vital, for example, what will the school be free from?

- Free from LA control (but LA is replaced by the Secretary of State)
- Freedom to set own pay and conditions (implications need to be carefully considered)
- Freedom from the national curriculum
- Freedom to change lengths of terms and school days

Financial considerations

- Academies have equivalent funding to maintained schools
- It is essential to establish services that will no longer be provided by the LA, decide the services the school will need and compare the cost of providing them with the additional funding received (the LA may add a risk factor to the cost)
- Does the school have the staffing capacity and skills to commission and manage services effectively? (e.g. the DfE is recommending schools have a qualified accountant)
- Funding can go up and down in future years dependent on central funding allocation.
- Insurance (possibly additional cover for major disasters and governors' liability)
- Academies are not permitted to go into deficit

Other considerations & service provisions

Employers' responsibilities, including TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings [Protection of Employment] Regulations) and pension provision.

Also the following: Admissions, Health and Safety, SEN, School improvement, Licences and subscriptions Educational welfare service **and** Music services.

continued on P4

Conference Reports

21st Century Governance - Challenges for Governors

Niki Thomas - NCSL

Niki Thomas from the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services (their new title, previously NCSL) gave the conference an excellent overview of governance today and looking to the future. She explained that the college was a support mechanism for local and national leaders of education, but with no specific remit for governance however.

Spelling out the ministerial priorities (later contained in the White Paper) she said there would be more autonomy and greater responsibility with a more diverse landscape for support, challenge and improvement.

"Challenges remain," said Niki, and a focus on "in school variation" could be as great as 14 times different where a child was with an outstanding teacher for 3 years.

Several questions were posed to governors. How do we ensure continuous improvement in a time of austerity? What really matters? What are our core principles? How do we live our values?

Already changed is the traditional model of headship. School leadership teams have grown and new models are growing with Executive Headships, and school leaders working beyond their individual schools. School leadership faces demographic challenge, with two thirds of heads aged over 50, and one third aged 55 or over. Reassuringly Niki emphasised that a new younger generation *is* coming through with 41% of teachers aspiring to headship and 36% of women also now aspire to become heads.

In times of austerity, issues were about the creative use of resources, both human and physical. However, Niki counselled against reducing the leadership team, and asked, are they performing the right roles?

Challenges for Governors

- Does your school have effective partnerships?
- Have the Governors considered the potential benefits of a joint governance committee or federation?
- Where partnerships exist are the governors and leadership teams aware of their commitments to each other?
- Does your school have effective transitional arrangements?
- Does your school take part in good practice networks or partnerships to improve networks or partnerships to have a positive effect on behaviour and attendance?

Some useful research.

The National College's research into the impact on standards - Robert Hill 2007, "Achieving more Together". This demonstrates that partnerships add value, with improved inputs, outputs and outcomes.

A self improving system - also worth reading Prof. Hargreaves' "Creating the Self Improving School":

<http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/index/docinfo.htm?id=133672>

Both pieces of research can be googled.



Next Steps?

Niki also suggested some Next Steps for governors:

Go to the Models and Partnerships website

www.nationalcollege.org.uk/modelsandpartnerships

Download the Exploring Models of Leadership Toolkit

www.nationalcollege.org.uk/publications

Contact the Models and Partnerships consulting Team
mol@nationalcollege.org.uk / Telephone 01158 722169
niki.thomas@nationalcollege.org.uk

Attend a models and partnerships event

www.nationalcollege.org.uk/modelsofleadership/events

Niki concluded her very thought provoking presentation with the statement: "**The power of resilience, belief and collective leadership.**"

Gill Walker

Surrey Perspective on Change

Penny Plato - Chief Advisor, Surrey

This was a very concise but informative introduction to the Conference.

Penny Plato commented that although Government education policy was currently subject to continual change, she could make some points with certainty;

The detail concerning budgetary cuts following on from the CSR would be with schools in the New Year. As much of the funding is linked to the Pupil Premium, Surrey would not do well as we are not seen as an area of deprivation.

We must therefore target available resources to meet our needs. Many Special Grants will cease and the new National School Funding Formula will provide a fixed amount to all authorities. A similar school funding project failed a few years ago. We must remember that LA's cannot raise money from extra taxes.

All schools classed by Ofsted as "Good" or "Satisfactory" will be able to apply to become academies, though weaker schools

Implementing Culture Change in Schools

Liz Cross - The Connectives

Liz Cross of The Connectives, a social entrepreneurs' consultancy group, gave a very entertaining and inspiring presentation at the Conference. Originally from Canada, Liz has been a school governor for 23 years in Moss Side, Manchester. She spoke on a very wide ranging area of subjects, far too many to be covered here and her presentation slides are on the SGA website.

The objectives of her talk were to provide the opportunity to explore challenges of leading schools, to develop shared understanding of leadership, culture and the impact of both on performance. Finally she wanted to explore practical tools and techniques that could be taken away and used.

Liz devoted a lot of time to governors making outcomes and 'creating a difference', reminding us that we are a volunteer workforce of 350,000 and that we need a common language to develop the governor role. Liz told us never to underestimate the impact we can make in schools and to children's lives. Creating the right culture within schools was very important to ensure pupils and teachers work in a suitable environment to get things done to the highest standards.

She spoke about building on 'stuff' outside of school. Maintaining objectivity had proved important especially in her local area where young people have to do so much better at school to get past the Moss Side post code bias when applying for jobs. She said - to much agreement - that it is not acceptable to see some children do okay and then to view the rest as collateral damage within the system. Many systems can be seen as blunt instruments that are not tailored to individuals. Governors should be working for the children and the families and communities that they represent.

She also spoke about the social issues that governors face. We have no idea what children's reality is and can end up sounding like our parents. As governors we are trying to prepare children with no idea what their future may be.

One of the interesting social changes that Liz mentioned is

will have to be partnered with stronger schools. This means that 98% of Surrey's schools could apply to become Academies.

On SEN, Penny stated that a new Green Paper is due shortly which is expected to introduce many changes.

There will be a new Ofsted Framework which will reduce the number and frequency of inspections with the emphasis on identifying and inspecting weaker schools. There is some concern that Ofsted will raise the floor targets and make it more difficult to get better grades in other words, "Satisfactory" could become "Cause for Concern".

Most School Improvement is recognised as coming from schools themselves, especially from schools with good Head Teachers.

Many of the existing regulations concerning Classroom Management are to be scrapped.

In the government assault on quangos, many connected with education have already gone. This could leave some gaps in the distribution of additional funds in some sectors.

Many of these changes can be regarded as positive, but some also give cause for concern, particularly if undue pressure is exerted on schools to become Academies.

Glenys Mason



research has shown that millennium children are tending to point with their thumbs as the dominant finger due to texting and video games, rather than with the index finger. We need to think about social changes as life is completely different from when we left school. The current group of teenagers is known as Generation Z and she gave a list of ten traits to identify them (see the slides on the SGA website), for example, Generation Z communicates more using gadgetry rather than in person, this is demonstrated by the volume of texts and emails that children send per day.

Talking about economic and global changes, Liz quoted from a book, "A whole new mind" by Daniel H Pink which talks about needing to develop the creative right hand side of the brain for future growth. She said that there are plenty of countries with economies emerging where logical and analytical functions can be provided at a fraction of the cost of our own culture. We need to provide what children actually need in the future not what we think they need.

Referring to governance and leadership with the various structures that comprise leadership, Liz said that as part of the school governing body we should not just be informed as a governor, we need to be pro-active or even be asked by the school leadership for stuff we can make strategic decisions on.

On varying leadership styles Liz listed four types - the teller, the driver, the investor, the sense-maker and the engager. Again a lot more detail is in the slides. She also spoke of how trust is made up of clarity, performance focus, connectivity, freedom to act and how they feed into the leadership style.

Her final main area was dealing with leading 21st century schools and how this is a process of constant development. She highlighted one particular question governors should look at in more detail; whether all the potential stakeholders are on the radar and how the resources they could bring to the school can be used.

This was a challenging and interesting hour or so from Liz. We left the conference with many ideas and thoughts that can help us, as governors, deal with the culture changes that are happening and will continue to happen in our schools.

Neil Wilson

Academies *(continued from P1)*

Doris Neville-Davies - NGA South East Regional Director

NGA recommended procedure

- GB discusses and takes initial decision to consider academy status.
- GB registers an interest with DfE which provides a named DfE contact (some are more useful and/or pro-active than others).
- Working group set up to gather all the information.
- Discussion at single-issue GB meeting .
- Consult all relevant partners THEN, after consultation, GB takes decision whether or not to apply
- Legal advice is taken.
- GB makes final decision to sign the funding agreement .

In summary

- There is no deadline so investigate all implications very thoroughly
- Consider carefully the model funding agreement and articles of association
- Consult early and comprehensively
- Consider the implications of the effect on other local schools
- The most important issue to consider: *will academy status improve teaching and learning in the school?*

SGA Spring Conference

Our Spring Conference and AGM
will take place on

Saturday May 21st

at the Holiday Inn, Guildford

Further details of the programme and speakers
will be published on the SGA website
as they are finalised.



Surrey Governors' Association

c/o 19 Yewens, Chiddingfold, Surrey GU8 4SD

www.surreygovernorsassociation.org.uk

Email: surreygovernors@hotmail.com



www.nga.org.uk

Email: governorhq@nga.org.uk

NGA Bulletins are published
on the SGA website.

Some Key Questions

- What difference would converting make to children in the classroom and their opportunities?
- What freedoms would the school want to use and how?
- Are we sure that this cannot be done as a maintained school?
- What additional responsibilities would the governing body take on.
- What local authority services would the school lose and how would the school commission replacements?
- What additional potential liabilities would the governing body have if they took on Academy Status?
- What would the Trust Body look like?
- How would the governing body be made up?
- What are the financial implications of academy status, including the approximate costs of the additional services the governing body would have to provide for the school?
- Does the school currently have the capacity and capabilities within the staff group to commission and manage services effectively (for example, the DfE is recommending that staff should include a qualified accountant), and if not, how is this to be rectified and what would be the cost?
- What other school or schools would we support and in what way?
- What were the results of the consultations carried out with the key stakeholders? (Or if this is the first time the governing body has met to discuss the issue: who are we consulting and how?)

Further Information

NGA Members can obtain further information
from the NGA website:

[http://www.nga.org.uk/](http://www.nga.org.uk)

Also the DfE web site at

<http://www.education.gov.uk/academies>

Governor Reps still needed for Surrey Schools Forum

School Governors are still needed to serve as members of the Surrey Schools Forum. Some members are coming towards the end of their term of office and we still need substitute members.

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.

School Governors are encouraged to submit expressions of interest to **Sheila Danson** - Administrator, SGA (contact details below)

Further information relating to the Surrey Schools Forum can be found on the Surrey County Council Website: