

Growing governance

Emma Knights reflects on a decade past and looks forward to an exciting one to come

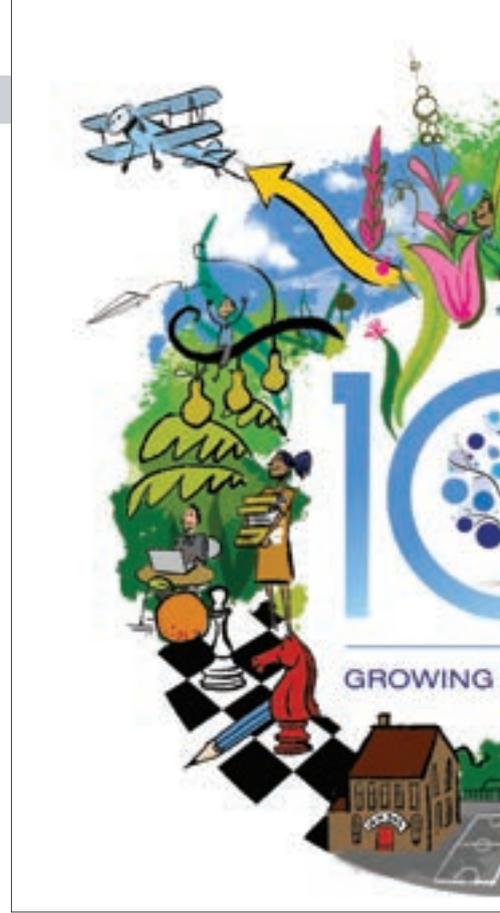
OFFICIALLY WE came into existence in February 2006, when the National Association of School Governors and the National Governors' Council merged to create the NGA. The organisation had just a chief executive and my excellent deputy, Gillian Allcroft, with administrative support.

Our number of school members has more than quadrupled, which has allowed us to build the current staff team. We now provide information, advice, guidance, training and consultancy to governors and trustees across England. We also undertake research to ensure we are at the cutting edge of practice and provide a voice for those governing state schools to the national level.

NGA's board of trustees and I are proud that the organisation has moved from reflecting on the state of school governance to leading the debates and setting the standards to which we aspire, as with our recent publication of model schemes of delegation for multi academy trusts (MATs). We hope these and all our work builds on collective wisdom – both the experience of our members and the expertise of our staff.

Anniversary dinner

We will be saying more in a report to be published in time for our anniversary conference on 18 June 2016 in our home town of Birmingham. Sometimes one needs to take a break with friends, restore the banks of energy and have fun: so



if you are able, please do join us at our anniversary dinner on Friday 17 June. Book a seat now as places will be limited.

In 10 years' time school governance structures in England are likely to look very different, but the principles should be the same. Our eight elements of effective governance will stand the test of time and

THE NGA/GOVERNANCE STORY



1980s

- **Education Act 1980** allows any governor to stand as chair, not just LEA governors

1994

- **National Governors' Council (NGC)** formed to represent local governor associations

1944

- **Education Act 1944** introduces free secondary education for all pupils

1970s

- **National Association of School Governors (NASG)** formed



2006

- **National Governors' Association (NGA)** follows merger between National Association of School Governors and National Governors' Council



- NGA policy supports **mandatory induction training** for school governors
- **www.nga.org.uk** starts
- Taking over from NASG, NGA publishes bimonthly **Governors' News**

2007

- **Outstanding Clerk Award**, inherited from NASG, celebrates clerks' work
- **Welcome to Governance**, inherited from NGC, published

2008

- **GOLD** membership begins
- **Matters Arising** magazine, now Governing Matters, published
- NGA, NAHT and ASCL publish **What Governors and Heads Should Expect From Each Other**
- Weekly **e-newsletter** begins

2009

- **Outstanding Governance Awards** launched





the fundamental purpose of governing in the interests of the pupils and improving their life chances must remain at the heart of everything we all do.

The vast majority of schools will be within MATs, with perhaps just a very few of the larger secondary academies remaining 'standalone'. This revolution of

governance has already started. However models have only very recently begun to develop, and they need reviewing and refining. Although there is not one model to suit all groups of schools, we can learn from each other.

Academy councillors

School governors as we have known them in local authority maintained schools will be no more; there will be trustees governing MATs. In all but the smallest MATs, we would expect to see academy councillors, undertaking the duties delegated to them by the board of trustees. Those roles might be slightly different in different academies – see p26 for our discussions with members.

I am calling them councillors to emphasise that they are not governors, but it might not be the right language; it seems more appropriate than talking of them as academy committee members, academy ambassadors or academy advisers. Whatever language evolves, we think those volunteering at academy level will play a vital role in making sure other players – pupils, parents, staff, the wider community and even local employers – have their voices heard and that the board of trustees renders account to all those who have such an important stake in the education of our children.

“Governance determines who has power, who makes decisions, how other players make their voice heard and how account is rendered”

The Institute on Governance, Canada

So who would have thought that as part of our 10-year celebrations, we would be considering changing our name to the National Governance Association? But that's one of the things we in the so-called third sector are proud of: staying ahead and responding quickly and flexibly. But we would not be here if you, our members, didn't think we were worth joining, so thank you for your support and let's face the second decade of NGA's existence with optimism that what we do is an essential part of ensuring children get the very best education that we can provide. Continue to grow governance in partnership with us. ●

Emma Knights is NGA chief executive



2010

- Labour government publishes **21st Century Schools: the implications for school governing bodies**
- **Coalition government takes office** with Michael Gove (below) as secretary of state for education
- **Academies Act 2010** widens the academies project; a flagship policy first instigated by the New Labour government
- **Special Schools Advisory Group on Governance** set up
- NGA starts **Q&A** series in response to Academies Act 2010 and SATs boycott



2011

- **TES/NGA joint annual survey** begins
- **Knowing Your School** briefings on data, parents, staff and finance published
- All NGA's **guidance and publications adapted** for use by those governing academies as well as local authority maintained schools
- **Eight elements of effective governance** adopted
- **First membership survey** finds 95% feel membership of NGA represents good value for money
- **All Party Parliamentary Group on Education Governance and Leadership (APPG)** set up with NGA as secretariat
- **Outstanding Governance Awards** presented at House of Commons by Lord Hill



2012

- **GOLDline** advice service starts
- NGA and NCSL jointly publish **Leading Governors: the role of the chair of governors in schools and academies**
- Eastern Leadership Centre and NGA join forces as the **Leading Governance Partnership**, to provide the Chairs of Governors' Leadership Development Programme
- APPG publishes **20 Key Questions for a Governing Board to Ask Itself**
- **Ofsted school inspection framework** places more focus on school governance
- Ofsted recommends **external reviews of governance**
- **Sir Michael Wilshaw**, Her Majesty's chief inspector, addresses NGA's conference (right)



Join our campaign

Mark Gardner urges members to get involved in growing governance to the next stage

OUR TENTH anniversary year will only make a difference if you engage with NGA's Growing Governance campaign. We're challenging school governors and trustees to step up and establish themselves as strategic leaders, by setting the educational agenda of their schools in 2016 and beyond, inspiring others with their ideas and creativity, engaging with and listening to others, using a broad range of ideas and galvanising the energy of the wider community.

The first step is for governors and trustees to engage the whole school community alongside school leaders in

a debate about the education of pupils, with the view to creating or refreshing an exciting vision that brings together the whole school in determining it.

We realise that a number of barriers might prevent boards from creating a clear and meaningful vision, not least the misconception that it is simply unnecessary or just a long-forgotten paragraph on the school's website.

The school's DNA

However, the vision is the starting point for everything the school is trying to achieve. A good vision should state explicitly what the school will look like in three to five years' time, including

an expression of what the children will have left the school having learned. Think of your vision alongside your ethos as the school's DNA.

Clarity of vision is one of three core functions for every governing board, and it's our privilege as governors and trustees to ensure that the vision, ethos and strategic direction of our school or schools are clearly defined. From this vision stems your strategy; armed with your strategy, the school's leaders can set about developing their plans to achieve your targets.

We know that there are many factors – qualifications and tests, performance tables, Ofsted, funding – that limit the freedoms governing boards have, or at least can feel as though they constrain us. Yet there is much room in the school year for doing things differently if we all have the confidence to do so.

Why not host a Growing Governance event at your school to really work on your vision and engage with

“The vision is the starting point for everything”

THE NGA/GOVERNANCE STORY (cont)

2013

- **Parliamentary Inquiry into School Governance** recommends measures to improve school governance
- **Lord Nash appointed under-secretary of state for schools** with responsibility for school governance
- NGA inaugurates larger **regional conferences** with keynote speakers
- NGA and SOLACE's **Clerking Matters** campaign successfully lobbies for National Clerks' Development Programme
- Fischer Family Trust launches **FFT Governor Dashboard**, developed in collaboration with NGA and Wellcome Trust
- **Consultancy and training pilot** launches
- We produce **video case study** with ITN outlining some governing body responsibilities for NAHT's conference
- **The Road to Federation**, our first research report, published
- NGA's **Outstanding Governance Awards** presented at House of Commons by Lord Nash



2014

- **Trojan horse** allegations of a plot by Muslim extremists to take over schools in Birmingham lead to a local as well as government investigation. NGA is part of review group set up to consider recommendations from investigator Ian Kershaw
- **Nicky Morgan MP** becomes secretary of state for education
- Eight **regional schools commissioners** appointed to oversee academies on behalf of secretary of state
- Half of new members now join NGA as **GOLD members**

inspiring governors

- NGA becomes a founding member of **Inspiring Governors Alliance** campaign to encourage more volunteers
- We publish **The State of School Governing** report with University of Bath





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#growing
governance



“Why not host a Growing Governance event at your school?”

raises the profile of school governance and has the power to kickstart change.

We hope this will be a real opportunity to improve the way in which you engage with your parents and your community. We hope you will be proud of what you produce. Later this year, enter our Outstanding Governance Awards, when we'll be asking you to include your vision. It is time for us to reclaim the educational agenda and creating a vision is just the start. ●

And don't forget to let us know what you're doing and learning by tweeting us.

Mark Gardner is assistant to NGA's chief executive and public relations officer



the community? You should aim to collect the views of the whole school community – pupils, parents, staff, the wider community and local employers – and then use the time with your senior leaders to consider these views, to think about the school's strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunities and threats on the horizon, before settling

on the vision. Download our Growing Governance resource pack, which will give you everything you need to help you create a vision and strategic plan.

But don't stop there. Share your vision with the local community, local councillors and your MP. Talking about what you're trying to achieve and the challenges you encounter in the process

2015

- Partnering with the Wellcome Trust, we publish **A Framework for Governance**
- NGA, NAHT, ASCL and LGA publish 3rd edition of **joint guidance** on what governors and heads should expect from each other
- **APPG 21 Key Questions for Multi Academy Trusts** published
- NGA reports on impact of Ofsted **inspections of local authority governance services**
- **Forming or Joining a Group of Schools: staying in control of your school's destiny** published by ASCL, NGA and education lawyers BrowneJacobson
- Ofsted reports that it has ordered **500 external reviews of governance**
- NGA begins **external reviews of governance** specifically for multi academy trusts
- NGA starts **360 degree self-assessment** reviews for chairs
- Nicky Morgan MP, secretary of state for education, addresses **NGA's summer conference** (below)
- NGA's **Outstanding Governance Awards** presented at House of Commons by Tristram Hunt, shadow education secretary, and Neil Carmichael MP

2016

- NGA celebrates 10 years with **Growing Governance** campaign
- Clerking Matters 2016 planned with new **Clerks' Advisory Group**
- NGA's e-newsletter receives **mark of excellence award**
- **Education and Adoption Act 2016** includes coasting schools and makes it easier for secretary of state to academise underperforming schools
- Government white paper **Educational Excellence Everywhere** prepares way for all schools to become academies and removes requirement for elected parents on governing boards of academies
- NGA works with NFER on research commissioned by DfE into how **impact and effectiveness in governance can be measured**
- Joint research with NFER and Future Leaders Trust into role of **executive headteachers**
- Study with University of Bath and York St John's University on **headteacher recruitment**
- Study of how **chairs of governing boards are using their time** ●

