



# **National Governors' Association**

## **Annual Report**

**November 2014 – October 2015**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Achievements & Developments**
- 3. 2015 – 2019 Strategic Plan**
- 4. Current Organisation**

## 1. Introduction

NGA has had another very busy year consolidating its position as the national body that represents school governors and trustees in England.

The **National Governors' Association** aims to improve the well-being of children and young people by promoting high standards in all our schools, and improving the effectiveness of their governing bodies. We do this by:

1. Providing information and advice to governors - **EXPERT**
2. Extending the understanding and practice of good school governance – **EXPERT**
3. Ensuring the voices of governors are heard – **REPRESENTATIVE**
4. Being recognised as the leading organisation on school governance, exercising influence through high quality policy communications, and through appropriate partnerships - **INFLUENTIAL**
5. Being a sustainable, well-managed and successful organisation through effective internal operations, sound financial management, and the development of the organisation, its business and its people - **SECURE and HEALTHY**

The last year has seen the NGA continue to grow once again – we now have one in four schools in England in membership; a significant milestone. Not only have membership numbers increased but ever more of you are taking advantage of our superb GOLD membership package. In addition to this and quite likely as a result of the louder voice this increased membership gives us, our influence and engagement in the national education scene has also been yet further enhanced. The Board have monitored progress in accordance with the strategic plan of the Association and we are delighted by the exceptional progress, which is a testimony to all but especially the staff of the organisation.

The year has once again seen rapid movement and change in education and especially in the greater demands on governors. NGA has of course not stood still in this landscape: we have increased our staffing and have been delighted to welcome on board some exceptional professionals to further boost our offer to members, our research capacity and our ability to speak truth to power.

I believe our influence within the education sector has never been higher. We continue to be seen as the organisation that is the voice for governance not only within the corridors of power in Whitehall but in the wider educational field. This does not happen overnight and is the result of years of careful and deliberate “lobbying” where it is most appropriate and can do the most good for governors across England. During the year we have taken a higher profile role in co-operative work with professional colleagues at ASCL, NAHT and the LGA and of course we were delighted that the Secretary of State for education, the Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP, spoke at our summer conference in Manchester, which has since been followed up with a face to face meeting. NGA regularly attends meetings with ministers at the DfE and contributes to a raft of committees and working groups.

I am immensely grateful to each member of the new and substantially smaller, more focussed Board for their support to me during my first year as Chair and to the organisation as a whole. I

would also like to thank our President, Baroness Howe, who uses her considerable influence to the benefit of all school governors and to Neil Carmichael MP, newly elected chair of the Education Select Committee who has kindly hosted events at Westminster for us.

Thanks also to you, our members for working with us, engaging in our surveys and letting your voice be heard.

This Association would not be the organisation it is today without the unstinting work of all members of our growing team of staff and especially the inspiration of our chief executive. On behalf of the Association I thank them all for their tireless efforts in championing school governance in England.

**Ian Courtney MBE**  
**Chair NGA, November 2015**

## **2. Achievements and Developments in 2014/15**

This report draws on our membership survey which closed on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> November, and updates the annual report included in the audited accounts up to the end March 2015.

### **Information and advice**

The well established e-newsletter sent to members each Friday during term-time is very much at the centre of our information service, and continues to be very well received – with an average satisfaction rating in our membership survey of 4.06 out of 5. The number of recipients of the e-newsletter has increased from 33 thousand to over 43 thousand by the end of this year.

*Governing Matters*, our bi-monthly members' magazine, continues to be extremely well received, again scoring on satisfaction, 4.1 out of 5 from members. The print run is now over 30 thousand copies and the magazine contains comment on changes, good practice, research and 'in our experience' articles written by governors. Any members with a story to tell should contact our editor: [editor@nga.org.uk](mailto:editor@nga.org.uk).

Our policy and information team, managed by the Deputy Chief Executive Gillian Allcroft, has expanded further, which allows us to continue to improve material available to our members on the website. The number of visitors to our website continues to grow.

The increased numbers of GOLD members means the team is answering more queries than ever before; these range from short one-off queries to long, complicated cases and the satisfaction score is extremely high at 4.25 out of 5. The NGA advice service is open to all GOLD members by phone or email ([GOLD@nga.org.uk](mailto:GOLD@nga.org.uk)), and is provided in partnership with Browne Jacobson Solicitors. A dedicated phone line is available on: 0121 237 3782.

### **Improving governance practice**

Our priority is to influence local governance practice to improve its effectiveness. Although much of this is achieved through our information and advice work for members, we aim to actively promote effective practice and models of governance in as many ways as possible, for

example, by using our many speaking engagements to highlight the strategic nature of the role and help governors and trustees to face the challenges.

We have taken every opportunity to promote NGA's eight elements of effective governance:

1. The right people around the table
2. Understanding roles & responsibilities
3. Good chairing
4. Professional clerking
5. Good relationships based on trust
6. Knowing the school – the data, the staff, the parents, the children, the community
7. Committed to asking challenging questions
8. Confident to have courageous conversations in the interests of the children and young people

These elements also influence NGA's priorities. Inducting new governors and new chairs so that they understand their own roles and responsibilities is of the utmost importance. A new edition of *Welcome to Governance* was produced in January 2015 and another edition of the *Chairs' Handbook* is in production, with prices held again this year and more governing boards receiving them free of charge through their GOLD membership. They once again scored highly in the membership survey (rated 4.04 and 4.07 out of 5 for satisfaction).

Our bank of questions for governors to ask continued to be expanded with each subject we work on. With new members joining the team we have begun to cover subjects we previously did not write guidance on, such as early years and sixth forms. We ran two focus groups of governors for FFT on updating their Governor data dashboard.

Two of our most widely acclaimed documents published this year were developed with partners: the first in January 2015 with Wellcome Trust, *A framework for Governance, a flexible guide to strategic planning* which helps governing boards to focus on five or six strategic priorities which then shape their monitoring work and the headteacher's objectives. With the Association of School and College leaders and BrowneJacobson, we published 'Forming or joining a group of school: staying in control of your school's destiny' at the September reception of the All-party Parliamentary group of Education Governance and Leadership; it was welcomed by Lord Nash, Under-secretary of State for Education, as 'a tremendous piece of work' saying 'I agree with it entirely'.

We have held a number of regional conferences (Taunton, London, Nottingham and Gateshead) which are free to members; topics were chosen to help governors and trustees address some their challenges, such as understanding data, the impact of the Pupil Premium, governing groups of schools, special education needs reform, improving HR and CPD, and they were also addressed by Senior HMIs from Ofsted and Regional Schools Commissioners. In May we also held our second conference for governors and trustees of special schools.

**Research projects:** Our second research report *The move beyond effective; key themes for local authority governors services from the 2013/14 Ofsted school improvement inspections* was published in February 2015 for NCOGs and launched at a conference supported by the Local Government Association. Work has also begun on two pieces of qualitative research, one looking at the use of chairs' time and the second at the scope of executive headship.

**Training:** Our Leading Governance partnership with the Eastern Leadership Centre (ELC) continues as the biggest licensee for the National College's Chairs of Governors' Leadership Development Programme, delivering across many areas in England. This partnership is also delivers the other workshops developed by the National College and the Clerks' Development Programme. We would like to thank Jacqueline McCamphill of ELC for her excellent work in co-ordinating the partnership. We also offer bespoke training through our team of consultants.

**Consultancy:** The NGA consultancy team, now standing at about twenty freelance consultants across the country, provides a range of bespoke training, governance reviews or other pieces of quality assured consultancy to schools or groups of schools. It is led by Clare Collins MBE, who has now been joined by Paul Aber, Head of training development. The service is available to non-members as well as members, and great care is taken to ensure that it is not subsidised by membership income. Work has been carried out for a number of organisations including TeachFirst, Future Leaders and academy chains. The team has been at the forefront of developing new models, such as peer review for governing boards and reviews of schemes of delegation in multi academy trusts.

**Supporting self-review:** This year NGA has developed two review tools, one with Evalua8 for whole governing boards and the other with ELC a 360 degree review of chairs. Both are sold at cost price, with a mentor session to discuss the results.

**Governance Awards 2015:** In June Tristram Hunt, then shadow Education Secretary, presented our bi-annual awards for Outstanding Governing Boards and Outstanding Clerks at a House of Commons reception. The judging is carried out by volunteer experts and event is a celebration of good governance. The finalists and winners continue to act as examples to others.

## Representing the voice of governors and trustees

The first stage of being able to represent the voice of governors and trustees is gathering views. We notify members of relevant consultations and seek their input. We regularly request feedback and views on both practice and policy through the weekly e-newsletter, the bulletin board produced for local associations, and in *Governing Matters*. We would very much like to thank those members who have shared their views and experiences with us, and would welcome more input from the membership. In July, we once again carried out the annual survey of governors with TES and the number of respondents increased considerably to almost 6,000. Many thanks to all those governors who have completed the survey; it provides us and other agencies with an invaluable source of data on governance which is not otherwise available.

Our own membership survey which has recently closed also asked respondents about which issues were most important to their schools, and which issues members wanted NGA to concentrate our lobbying on. The top four issues for us to seek change on were:

1. Changes to the funding formula (up from no. 2 place): 57%
2. Attracting high quality staff (up from no. 5): 42%
3. Ofsted inspections (down from no 1 place): 42%
4. Governance training, and other ways of improving the quality of governance: 35%

We now structure our bi-annual regional meetings so that the first item acts as a consultative discussion on a topical issue. In the Spring members considered payment of governors, in

particular chairs of boards, and after wide-ranging thoughtful discussion, there was a strong majority who disagreed with the need to do this. In the Autumn regional meetings the need for further freedoms with governing body constitutions were discussed and the findings have been fed into NGA's submission to the Department for Education.

In addition to these surveys and NGA events, we hear the views of governors from our trustees, our Special Schools Advisory Group, those who telephone the office for information or advice, and also the many governor events we are invited to by local association, local authorities and national conferences. We are also always really pleased to have emails from members with views and experiences.

There will always be some issues that members will disagree upon; governors and trustees have a broad range of opinions. Despite this, when asked in the recent survey how well NGA represented their views, the average score was 3.8 out of 5, slightly increased from 3.6 in the previous two years.

### Exercising influence

In June for the first time a Secretary of State gave the keynote address at our summer conference; Nicky Morgan took questions from members on those issues about which we received most requests; they included fair funding, pupil premium, curriculum and assessment, data, oversight, teacher supply and training for governors.

NGA has representatives on a large number of national groups; the key ones are currently the DfE's Education Forum, the DfE Advisory Group on Governance (AGOG), and DfE School and Academy Funding Group (SAFG) and its sub-group on financial efficiency. We have termly meetings with Lord Nash, the Under-Secretary of State for Schools, who has responsibility for governance. We have also had a number of one-to-one meetings with a range of officials on specific topics, attended a number of other roundtables, and have regular contact with the DfE's School Governance Unit, which we are pleased now covers academy governance. We have also had the opportunity to meet with the Regional School Commissioners. We are also in contact with Ofsted and conducted a session on governance for Senior HMIs,

We have regular and productive contact with and continue on the National College's Chairs' Advisory Group. We work closely with a number of other key partners, in particular the headteacher unions (ASCL and NAHT).

We submitted the following written responses to formal consultations:

Consultation issued by:	Consultation Title	Date
House of Commons Education Select Committee	Inquiry into the role of Regional Schools Commissioners	September 2015
Ofsted	Consultation on the publication of statistics on maintained schools and academies: inspections and outcomes	July 2015

Education and Adoption Public Bill Committee	Education and Adoption Bill	June 2015
College of Teaching	Establishment of the College of Teaching	26 Jan 2015
Department for Education (DfE)	Consultation A world class teaching profession	March 2015
DfE	Consultation on Working Together To Safeguard Children	February 2015
DfE	Consultation on changes to the arrangements for school governance in maintained schools	January 2015
Ofsted	Consultation on Ofsted's proposals for a new framework for the inspection of schools	December 2014
ASCL	Consultation on ASCL's self-improving system draft blueprint	December 2014

We also gave oral evidence:

House of Commons Education Select Committee	Inquiry into Regional School Commissioners	October 2015
Education and Adoption Public Bill Committee	Education and Adoption Bill	June 2015
House of Commons Education Select Committee	Inquiry into Academies and Free School	April 2015
House of Commons Education Select Committee	Inquiry into Personal, Social, Health and Economic education and Sex and Relationships Education in schools	19 November 2014
House of Commons Public Accounts Committee	School oversight and intervention	17 November 2014

We fed informally into other reviews, for example to the National Audit Office, Ofsted's analysis of External Review of Governance impact (informal) and to the National College Teaching and Leadership's programmes on governance.

We continue to work closely with ASCL and NAHT, publishing in April 2015 a new edition of *What governing boards should expect from schools leaders and what school leaders should expect from governing boards*. We were pleased to be approached by them to join in setting up the Foundation for Leadership in Education.

We seek to influence members of all political parties, and act as the secretariat of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Education Governance and Leadership; the APPG has held three extremely well-attended meetings, and not only updated its well received *20 questions for a governing board to ask itself*, but also followed these in March with *21 Questions for multi academy trusts*

We had published well in advance of the General Election a manifesto for governance, which included eight asks of a new Government:

1. the issue of school governance to be given greater prominence in central and local government policy making;
2. induction training to be mandatory and free for all new school governors and trustees;
3. the government to provide financial incentives both to encourage effective collaboration and to schools wishing to join together in LA maintained federations as well as multi – academy trusts;
4. funding to be distributed in an equitable, objective and transparent manner. Three year indicative budgets should be introduced for both capital and revenue funding, and the level of school funding increased;
5. the supply of high quality headteachers and teachers to be given more consideration centrally and for the government to take affirmative action to prevent a serious staffing shortage;
6. the promotion of professional governing body clerks;
7. a reduction in the number of new initiatives from central government and a period of relative stability to allow schools to continue to improve; and
8. more flexibility from employers from governing duties.

We continue to talk to the Government about these issues, and have recently met with No 10 stakeholders team and with Rob Wilson, minister for Civil Society to follow up the manifesto pledge to give time off to employees in larger companies. We are also in contact with employers organisations, including the CBI and the British Chambers of Commerce, about promoting governance to employees.

## Sustainable organisation

We are pleased to report that our membership overall continues to grow:

Categories of membership	% increase in number of members					
	Nov 09 – Oct 10	Nov 10 – Oct 11	Nov 11 – Oct 12	Nov 12 – Oct 13	Nov 13 - Oct 14	Nov 14 - Oct 15
in order of contribution beginning with the greatest						
GB GOLD	51%	152%	85%	145%	45%	28%
GB Standard	4%	9%	55%	-1%	7%	9%
Corporate/local	8%	7%	7%	5%	11%	19%

authority						
Local Associations	4%	0%	-3%	-14%	2%	-5%
Individual	29%	26%	12%	-7%	7%	12%

This means we now have governors from more than one in four schools in membership. About half our new members choose GOLD membership on joining and some of our existing members chose to upgrade to GOLD. Many of our new corporate members are multi academy trusts.

**Supporting local associations:** we appreciate some local associations are struggling with a reduction in local authority funding and volunteers strapped for time. We ran an event for chairs of local associations in May and have recently employed an information officer (Fay Holland) who is available to provide support to associations.

**Value for money:** When members were asked in the survey, "Overall, do you feel that your membership fee is good value for money (1 is not good value, 5 is very good value)", the response average was 4.2, an increase from 3.9 over the past two years, which is particularly pleasing at a time when school finances are tight.

We would like to thank our sponsors for their support: TES Prime, Target Tracker, GEL, Modern Governor, and PS Financials. We would also like to thank those local authorities, local associations and groups of academies who promote NGA membership to their schools as part of their own support packages.

We believe we enter the coming year, our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, well-placed to make the best of the opportunities and to continue to play our part in improving the standards in schools across England in the interests of children and young people.

**Emma Knights, Chief Executive, November 2015**

## National Governors' Association Strategic Plan 2015 to 2019

**National Governors' Association** aims to improve of the well-being of children and young people in England by promoting high standards in all our schools, and improving the effectiveness of their governing bodies.

We do this by:

1. Providing information and advice to governors - **EXPERT**
2. Extending the understanding and practice of good school governance – **EXPERT**
3. Ensuring the voices of governors are heard – **REPRESENTATIVE**
4. Being recognised as the leading organisation on school governance, exercising influence through high quality policy communications, cutting edge practice, and through appropriate partnerships - **INFLUENTIAL**
5. Being a resilient, well-managed and successful organisation through effective internal operations, sound financial management, and the development of the organisation, its business and its people - **SECURE and HEALTHY**

**NGA's top priority over the coming four years** is to extend our reach to schools which are not currently engaged with our work to order to improve governance.

**At the end of 2019**, NGA will:

- Be confirmed as the independent source of information and support for school governors, trustees and governing boards as well as their representative voice;
- Have more than half of all governing boards in England in membership; and
- Have influenced the shape, culture and practice of school governance in a way which strengthens accountability in order to improve the education of pupils.

To achieve this, **in 2015/16** we need to focus on:

- improving the extent and scope of our guidance centre, while continuing to ensure the quality of all our services;
- continuing to raise our profile across the education sector;
- exploring new and innovative routes for extending our services and the influence of our expertise, for example, with a training offer available to governing boards who are currently not availing themselves of high quality training, and
- developing a meaningful 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary campaign.

These activities will act to help us meet our governing board membership target.

**Meeting objective 1:** Providing information and advice to promote high standards in the exercise by governors and governing bodies of their responsibilities – **EXPERT**

- 1.1 Deliver the electronic newsletter, magazine and the two existing publications in a timely fashion and to members' satisfaction;
- 1.2 Publish a third new publication; Welcome to MAT trusteeship by October 2015;
- 1.3 Further develop our web information, responding to members' request, and improve the website design
- 1.4 Continue to grow the advice service for GOLD governing board members.
- 1.5 Pilot access to the GOLD advice team for corporate members (local authorities, academy trusts and diocesan bodies) who join their schools in membership.

**Meeting objective 2:** Extending the understanding and practice of good school governance – **EXPERT**

- 2.1 Promote the 'Eight elements of effective governance' and examples of successful practice of school governance and from other sectors, with partners where relevant;
- 2.2 Develop innovative tools for improving practice, including a 360 review for chairs and an electronic governing board review tool.
- 2.3 Provide a bespoke training and consultancy service, and continue to work in partnership with Eastern Leadership Centre to deliver the National College of Teaching & Leadership's governance programmes;
- 2.4 Explore NGA's potential role in developing a broader offer of training and development, including e-learning, with partners;
- 2.5 Initiate and collaborate with research into school governance, engaging governors in it; and disseminate relevant research findings to inform practice.

**Meeting objective 3:** Ensuring the voices of governors are heard – **REPRESENTATIVE**

- 3.1 Hold national and regional events at which governors can express their views (these events also contribute to objectives 1 & 2) and at the AGM vote on resolutions;
- 3.2 Carry out regular surveys of governors, where possible in collaboration with partners, and consult members through our range of communications and in any other ways, such as the Special Schools Governors Forum;
- 3.4 Further develop the ways in which NGA can support local associations of governing bodies, and their ability to influence at local level;
- 3.5 Use opportunities to speak and listen at association and local authority conferences (this also contributes to objective 2);
- 3.6 Attend and take an active role on government and partner groups at national level, representing governors' views (this contributes to objective 4)

**Meeting objective 4:** Being recognised as the leading organisation on school governance, exercising influence through high quality policy communications, cutting edge practice, and through appropriate partnerships - **INFLUENTIAL**

- 4.1 Monitor and analyse data, practice, policy developments and research on school governance (and report this to governors, contributing to objectives 1 & 2),

- 4.2 Develop position statements and consultation responses on the key issues, drawing on both this evidence and the views of governors,
- 4.3 Lobby Government and opposition in the light of this intelligence and positions, including working in partnership where appropriate;
- 4.4 Undertake effective media and public affairs work, including speaking at national events, to disseminate the evidence and NGA positions, to ensure school governance remains high on the political agenda and to spread effective practice;
- 4.5 Monitor the number of organisations seeking to work with the NGA and the success of any partnerships.

**Meeting Objective 5:** Being a resilient, well-managed, and successful organisation through effective internal operations, sound financial management, and the development of the organisation, its business and its people - **SECURE and HEALTHY**

- 5.1 Market NGA in order to increase governing board membership;
- 5.2 Continue to ensure sound financial systems and effective financial management;
- 5.3 Invest in the staff group in order to ensure they are developed and the strategic plan can be delivered; and
- 5.4 Ensure stable and effective governance of the organisation.

## Current Organisation

### Members of the NGA Board of Trustees

(14 November 2014 – 15 November 2015)

Name		Role
Maggi Bull	Elected 14 Nov 2014	Vice chair
Ian Courtney	Elected 14 Nov 2014	Chair
Brent Fitzpatrick	Elected 14 Nov 2014	Honorary treasurer
Dave Harries	Elected 14 Nov 2014	
Siddique Hussain	Elected 14 Nov 2014	Honorary secretary
Niki Lamont	Elected 14 Nov 2014	
Fred Manning	Elected 14 Nov 2014	
Baroness Howe of Idlicote		President
Professor John Adams MBE		Vice-President

The reduced size of the Board followed last year's reconstitution agreed by members in June 2014. A skills audit was undertaken by the new Board members and then a recruitment exercise undertaken to fill the identified gaps, which were charitable/corporate law, national lobbying and marketing/PR. The board is now able to operate without committees.

### NGA Staff

Chief Executive	Emma Knights
Deputy Chief Executive	Gillian Allcroft
Office Manager	Victoria Stokoe
Finance Officer	Lisa Richards (p/t)
Assistant to Chief Executive	Mark Gardner
Head of Information	Sam Henson
Head of Advice	Post vacant

Head of Communication & Marketing	Francey Smith
Head of Training Development	Paul Aber
Research and Project Manager	Eleanor Howarth
Senior Advice Officer	Rani Kaur
Advice Officers	Katie Everett (from September 2014) Niki Gandham (from October 2014)
Research & Information Officer	Tom Fellows
Information and Policy Officer	Fay Holland
Information Officer	Kathryn Dwyer
Administrative Officer	Ravinder Banger Sandra Soloman
Membership Officer	Anicka Bashir Adele Cotterill