



# **National Governors' Association**

## **Annual Report**

**November 2013 – October 2014**

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## 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 again been one of continued excellent growth not only in terms of membership of the Association but also in terms of influence. The Board have monitored progress in accordance with the strategic plan of the Association. We are delighted by the exceptional progress, which is a testimony to all but especially the staff of the organisation.

The year has, as now seems the norm, seen rapid movement and change in education and especially in the greater demands on governors. For NGA to respond to this challenge and ensure that our members get the very best up to date information we have again invested in expanding our capacity in staffing to deliver the weekly e-bulletin, publications and advice. We have undertaken a measured expansion of our consultancy service providing a range of tailored support and this service has been very well received for its professionalism and capability. Further expansion has taken place in the Leading Governance partnership to deliver Chairs' and Clerks' development programme.

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.

I am immensely grateful to the whole Board for their support over the last year both to myself and to the organisation as a whole. We will be saying goodbye at the AGM to some current members of the Board and especially so to some long-serving members whose contributions go back to the formation of NGA and beyond. On behalf of the Association I thank them along with the continuing contribution of our President, Baroness Howe, who uses her considerable influence to the benefit of all school governors.

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

**Duncan Howarth, Chair NGA, November 2014**

## **2. Achievements and Developments in 2013/14**

This report draws on our membership survey carried out in October 2014, and updates the annual report included in the audited accounts up to the end March 2014.

### **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 out of 5. The number of recipients of the e-newsletter has increased from 27 thousand to over 33 thousand this year.

*Governing Matters*, our bi-monthly members' magazine, continues to be extremely well received, again scoring on satisfaction, 4 out of 5 from members, with its combination of good practice, comment on changes, 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, and the increased numbers of GOLD members has allowed us to expand the advice team from three to four. The NGA advice service is open to all GOLD members by phone or email ([GOLD@nga.or.uk](mailto:GOLD@nga.or.uk)), and is provided in partnership with Browne Jacobson Solicitors. A dedicated phone line is available on: 0121 237 3782.

The website was altered over the summer to improve a number of the features, in particular the search facility and access from mobiles, and also the integration of the members' area with freely available information to create a guidance centre. Work will continue to improve this feature over the coming year.

### **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 2014 and the *Chairs' Handbook* in August 2014, with a reduction in price for members. They once again scored highly in the membership survey (rated 3.9 and 4.0 out of 5 for satisfaction).

A number of issues on which we have focused over the past couple of years, such as, extending governors' access to and understanding of data, developing questions to ask headteachers and *Clerking Matters*, have become core business for NGA, and we are now focusing additionally on issues such as improving strategic planning and ensuring staff development. We developed the National College's material on the extension of performance related pay to the main scale which has been used widely across England at free workshops for governors. The most controversial element with members of our work to improve outcomes for children by improving governance has been our support for governing groups of local schools. As well as federations, we are experts in multi-academy (MATs) structures and in March contributed to Independent Academies Association's event on MATs

**Inspiring governance alliance:** NGA was one of the founder members of this alliance which also comprise the Department for Education, Education & Employers Taskforce, SGOSS, NCOGS and the CBI. The alliance was launched in May to encourage volunteers. NGA donated material to the [www.inspiringgovernors.org](http://www.inspiringgovernors.org) such as the role description for governor and the skills audit for governing bodies.

**Training:** Our Leading Governance partnership with the Eastern Leadership Centre is now 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.

**Consultancy:** The NGA consultancy service begun eighteen months ago was confirmed as part of NGA's service at the end of its pilot year. The team, led by Clare Collins, stands at a dozen consultants across the country and will only increase in line with demand. 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 and some academy groups. Any further information can be obtained from [Fay.Holland@nga.org.uk](mailto:Fay.Holland@nga.org.uk)

**Governance Awards 2015:** We have opened our bi-annual awards for Outstanding Governance in September 2014 and entries for both Outstanding Governing Bodies and Clerks presented by Lord Nash, the Under-Secretary of State for Schools, at the House of Commons.

## 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. Over 2,400 governors completed the survey, giving us a large amount of useful data about the views of governors which we can use in a range of ways. Our own membership survey in October 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 five responses for us to work on were:

- Ofsted inspections
- Changes to the funding formula
- Governance training
- Support services for schools
- Attracting high quality staff (this is the first year this has featured in the top five).

In addition, information about the views of governors comes from our trustees, regional events, conferences, local association events and local authority governor conferences to which we are invited, our Special Schools Advisory Group, and from those who telephone the office for information or advice.

There will always be some issues that members will disagree upon. Despite this, when asked in the survey how well NGA represented their views, the average score was 3.6 out of 5, exactly the same as last year.

## Exercising influence

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 sub-groups on such issues as reducing bureaucracy and 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.

We have regular and productive contact with Ofsted, 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 Responded
Department for Education (DfE)	Consultation on SEN Code of Practice and associated regulations	December 2013 & June 2014

School Teachers' Review Body (STRB)	Consultation on Teachers' Pay – specifically percentage rise	December 2013
House of Commons Education Select Committee	Inquiry into Academies and Free Schools	December 2013
Ofqual	A Level Regulatory Requirements	January 2014
Policy Exchange	Future of Ofsted	January 2014
DfE	School Governance Constitution Regulations	March 2014
DfE	Guidance on pupils with medical conditions in schools	March 2014
Portsmouth City Council Scrutiny Committee	Governance of Schools	April 2014
Cornwall County Council Scrutiny committee	Governance of Schools	April 2014
DfE	Fairer School Funding Consultation	April 2014
DfE	Management of Independent Schools – proposed regulations	April 2014
Ofsted	Separate reporting of sixth forms and maintained nurseries	May 2014
DfE	Draft School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document	May 2014
Ofqual	Consultation on Reforming GCSEs in Languages	May 2014
Ofqual	Setting GCSE Grade standards	June 2014
House of Commons Education Select Committee	Personal, Social, Health and Economic education and Sex and Relationships Education in schools	June 2014
DfE	Publishing performance data on school websites	July 2014
Labour Party	Education and Children	July 2014
DfE	Independent School Standard Regulations	August 2014

Ofqual	Completing qualification reform	September 2014
Ofqual	Developing GCSE, A and AS levels for first teaching	September 2014
DfE	School Admissions Code	September 2014
STRB	Consultation on Teachers' Pay – specifically percentage rise	October 2014

We gave oral evidence to a number of enquiries, such as the School Teachers' Pay Review Body (STRB) and the House of Commons Education Select Committee inquiry into academies. We also participated in Birmingham City Council's Trojan Horse Review Group.

We seek to influence members of all political parties, and have met with spokespeople from the three main parties. We act as the secretariat of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Education Governance and Leadership; the APPG has held two extremely well-attended meetings, and the chair of the APPG, Neil Carmichael MP, secured a debate in Westminster Hall on the subject of school governance. In partnership with ASCL and CfBT for the first time we held fringe meetings at each of the three main party conferences.

We published a manifesto for governance and we have eight asks:

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.

## Sustainable organisation

We are pleased to report that our membership overall continues to grow, but in particular GOLD governing body membership, which we encourage wherever possible and for the first year represents the largest category of membership income.

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
in order of contribution beginning with the greatest					
GB GOLD	51%	152%	85%	145%	45%
GB Standard	4%	9%	55%	-1%	7%
Corporate/local authority	8%	7%	7%	5%	11%
Local Associations	4%	0%	-3%	-14%	2%
Individual	29%	26%	12%	-7%	7%

**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 3.9 out of 5, the same as last year.

We would like to thank our sponsors for their support: **TES Prime, Towergate Education, Target Tracker, GEL, Modern Governor, PS Financials and Zurich Mutual.** 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.

To accommodate the growing staff team we have now moved onto the 7<sup>th</sup> Floor of 36 Great Charles Street.

We believe we enter the coming 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 2014**

### 3. Strategic Plan 2014/17

**NGA's top priority over the coming three years is to continue to increase the profile of the organisation, in order to:**

- confirm NGA as both the independent source of information and support and the representative voice for governors and governing bodies;
- extend our reach to more governing bodies, thus enabling us to increase effectiveness of the practice of school governance while ensuring organisational stability;
- increase the organisation's capacity so that it is better able to meet the requests from members and partners for tools to develop outstanding practice; and
- be in a strong position to influence the future shape of school governance.

To achieve this, **in 2014/15** we need to continue to focus on:

- improving the extent and scope of our information and on-line support and continuing to ensure the quality of all our services; and
- increasing the numbers of governing body members, while at the same time
- promoting a manifesto for outstanding governance which shapes the current debate about how to transform governance in order to ensure pupils are enabled to achieve their full potential.

**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 two publications in a timely fashion and to members' satisfaction;
- 1.2 Further develop our web information, responding to members' request, and improve the website design
- 1.3 Continue to grow the GOLD advice service, meet needs

**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 Review the training and consultancy service, and continue to work in partnership with Eastern Leadership;
- 2.3 Initiate and collaborate with research into school governance, engaging governors in it; and disseminate relevant research findings to inform practice, and
- 2.4 Update and develop new tools, models and guidance which will improve governance,

**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;
- 3.3 Consult members in other ways – through our range of communications, our Board and Special Schools Governors Forum;
- 3.4 Develop 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, 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.

**Meeting Objective 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**

- 5.1 Market NGA in order to increase governing body 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

(16 November 2013 – 15 November 2014)

	Name	General Director or Regional Director	Role
1	Stephen Adamson	General	
2	Judith Bennett	General	
3	Maggi Bull	General	Vice chair & chair of policy committee
4	Ian Courtney	Regional South West	Honorary Secretary
5	Terry Douris	General	
6	Brent Fitzpatrick	Regional Yorkshire and the Humber	Honorary treasurer and chair of Finance & Business Development Committee
7	Michael Greenacre	General	
8	Duncan Haworth	General	Chair of the board
9	Siddique Hussain	Regional West Midlands	Vice chair and chair of communications committee
10	Andrew Kent	General	
11	Niki Lamont	Regional East of England	
12	Patrick Lowe	Regional South East	
13	Fred Manning	Regional East Midlands	
14	Susan Marsh	Regional North West	
15	Frank Ridley	Regional North East	
16	Brenda Steel	General	
17	Richard Thompson	Regional London	
18	Harry Ziman	General	
	Baroness Howe of Idlicote	President	
	Professor John Adams MBE	Vice President	

**NGA Staff**

Chief Executive	Emma Knights
Policy Manager & Deputy Chief Executive	Gillian Allcroft
Office Manager	Victoria Stokoe
Finance Officer	Lisa Richards (p/t)
Assistant to Chief Executive	Mark Gardner
Advice Manager	Philip Wood
Communications & Marketing Officer	Laura Owen (until October 2014)
Research and Information Officer	Eleanor Howarth
Advice Officer	Mahatama Uppal (until March 2014) Rani Kaur
Information Officers	Katie Everett (from September 2014) Tom Fellows (from September 2014) Niki Gandham (from October 2014) Fay Holland (from September 2014)
Administrative Officer	Ravinder Banger
Membership Officer	Anicka Bashir and Adele Cotterill (job-share)