

THE MAGAZINE FOR SCHOOL AND TRUST GOVERNANCE

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Governance
Association

GOVERNING MATTERS

March 2022 | nga.org.uk



A FINE BALANCE

Weighing up the vital
partnership between
board and executive

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THE VALUE
IN LISTENING

The Computing Quality Framework

Supporting schools to deliver excellence in computing



Computing
Quality Framework



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"The CQF showcases the progress we've made in our computing department and helped us to review our aims and create plans to achieve our goals. As an NCCE Computing Hub, we're also looking forward to supporting other schools to achieve the Computing Quality Mark."

Sophie Barr, computer science teacher at Pate's Grammar School, Cheltenham

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Education**

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JOIN NGA

The National Governance Association (NGA) is the membership organisation for governors, trustees and governance professionals of state schools in England.

We are an independent, not-for-profit charity that aims to improve the educational standards and wellbeing of young people by increasing the effectiveness of governing boards and promoting high standards. We are expert leaders in school and trust governance, providing information, advice and guidance, professional development and e-learning.

We represent the views of governors, trustees and governance professionals at a national level and work closely with, and lobby, UK government and educational bodies.

For more information on joining NGA, visit www.nga.org.uk/membership

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"AN EFFECTIVE GOVERNING BOARD IS ABLE TO SUPPORT AND CHALLENGE SCHOOL LEADERS"

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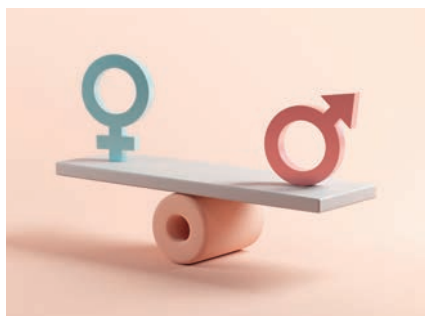
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A word from the editor

Sam Henson, director of policy and information, on how NGA is setting out its stall for 2022 regarding the new education White Paper

You may have already seen the Department for Education's long-awaited White Paper. This sets out the wider vision for the future of the school system with a focus on both standards and improvement.

The DfE has not been shy in asserting that it wants every school to be part of a family of schools within a multi academy trust (MAT). For the government to achieve its intended ambition, and to address the current mixed economy sector, it will need to win the hearts and minds of the decision-makers – governing boards. As I write, the details of the White Paper are unknown, but NGA has been busy engaging with members to obtain their views.

NGA has the privilege of speaking to and representing governing boards of all types of state schools, and therefore understanding all perspectives. This has been crucial as we shared our thinking with the DfE ahead of the publication.

NGA carries a unique voice into these conversations because we build on the information and experience you have shared with us. During the spring term we sought more in-depth stories from chairs of maintained schools who have considered joining a MAT but have not yet made the move. This builds on what we have heard from those of you governing in both single academy trusts and MATs through our governance leadership forums. We are pleased to be releasing a new edition of our joint guidance with ASCL and Browne Jacobson on what to consider when considering joining or forming a MAT, so look out for that in our Knowledge Centre.

The DfE has confirmed it is considering how to further strengthen local governance within MATs. Local governance is integral to the vast majority of

MATs, but the system is still grappling with what meaningful local governance across every MAT looks like. On page 12 we look at this in more detail, introducing NGA's latest thought piece on the future of the local tier within MAT governance, which argues that MATs engaging positively with local tiers achieve better governance.

But there is so much more that future national education policy needs to address, and in this edition of *Governing Matters* we come back to some of the defining issues of the era.

On page 24, NGA's PR Officer Elizabeth Collin reports on the issue that you told us was your biggest strategic priority this year: pupil wellbeing. While pupil mental health and wellbeing has emerged as a definitive

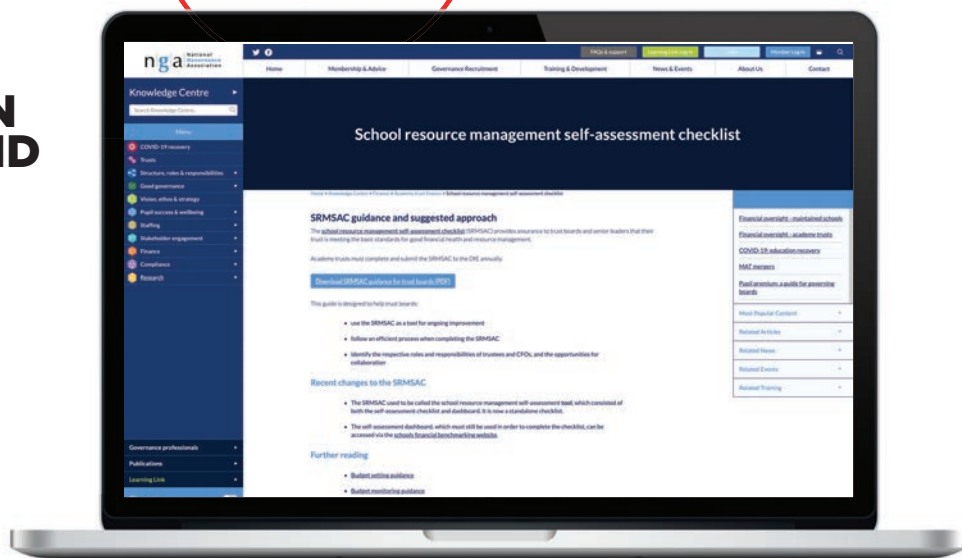
priority for boards, there is some indication that the information boards need to effectively address the issue is not commonly explored.

While pupil wellbeing and pupil voices are distinct areas, pupil voices provide some of that key intelligence, and Elizabeth looks at the practical elements of how boards can engage pupils more effectively. And our cover story introduces one of our big three priorities for 2022 – leadership. On page 16 Emma Knights and colleagues from the leadership associations NAHT and ASCL explore ways of developing successful partnerships between those leading and those governing. 

“NGA carries a unique voice because we build on the information and experience you have shared with us”

NEW GUIDANCE ON FINANCES AND RESOURCES

All maintained schools and academy trusts must complete and submit the schools financial value standard (SFVS) and school resource management self-assessment checklist (SRMSAC), respectively. NGA has developed new guides to help boards to get the most out of these tools and follow an efficient process when completing them. The guidance is designed to encourage collaboration with school business professionals and make



best use of their expertise, and also provide governing boards and trust boards with assurance that their organisation is meeting the basic standards of good financial health and resource management.

Download SFVS guidance for governing bodies
bit.ly/SFVSGuidance

Download SRMSAC guidance for trust boards
bit.ly/SRMSAC

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

We have a packed summer schedule for you this year, with a range of forums, network events, conferences and webinars to keep you up to date with the latest information, advice and guidance. Our summer conference seminars will cover the key issues affecting governors and trustees – keep an eye on the weekly newsletter for more information.

Book your place at www.nga.org.uk/events



21 April	Pupil attendance – Webinar
12 May	What the White Paper means for governing boards – Webinar
16 May	Trust Board Governance Leadership Forum
18 May	LAC Governance Leadership Forum
24 May	Regional Forum (Yorkshire and the Humber)
26 May	Regional Forum (East of England)
6 June	Maintained Schools Governance Leadership Forum
20-23 June	Summer Conference Seminars
30 June	Governance Professional Network
5 July	SEND Network
6 July	Young Governors Network
11 July	MAT Governance Network

WELCOME TO GOVERNANCE LIVE - SUMMER TERM DATES

Welcome to Governance LIVE is our newest membership benefit available to NGA GOLD and MAT trustee members. Designed for new governors and trustees, the Welcome to Governance LIVE session will support you to make an impact in your first six months as a new governor or trustee.

The sessions explore:

- what you can expect (the positives and examples of real-life challenges)
- top tips and the support available to you
- how to make an impact quickly (the type of school/trust you'd like it to be and how to support it in achieving its vision)

3 May

Welcome to Governance LIVE LA Maintained Schools

5 May

Welcome to Governance LIVE Local Academy Committee

10 May

Welcome to Governance LIVE for new trustees of a MAT

11 May

Welcome to Governance LIVE Single Academy Trusts

If you have new members on your board but haven't received an email from us, you can book your place at www.nga.org.uk/Welcome-to-Governance-LIVE.aspx



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Thank you to

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#MTPTproject

and #WomenEd

#MotherofAllPayGaps

event on the 26th March.

We'll be sharing concrete

strategies to tackle the

#motherhoodpenalty in education!

NGA school and trust governance

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Have you heard?

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celebrating #Artsmark20

with a nationwide

#DaytoCreate on

6 July for schools and

education settings

across England.

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Our 'How to arrange

meetings' e-learning

module covers one of

our most requested

topics – agenda

setting and organising

meetings. Ideal for new

clerks, someone who is

providing administration

for your board or

experienced clerks

seeking a refresher.

SOCIAL ROUNDUP

THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY: PUPILS' PERSPECTIVES

Pupils experiencing poverty in England are financially excluded from full participation in a wide range of school subjects and activities, according to findings published this week by the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) and Children North East.

As part of The Cost of the School Day project, the report shares the voices of pupils and their families, highlighting the stigma that comes from schools often unintentionally drawing attention to family incomes, with children feeling embarrassed and different.

In our previous issue of Governing Matters we interviewed CPAG's Kate Anstey and Georgina Burt as they outlined how you and your board can 'poverty proof' your school.

You can download the new report from cpag.org.uk/cost-of-the-school-day

NEW BENEFIT FOR NGA MEMBERS

NGA is always looking for ways to support you, our members, and we are delighted that Pay in Education (PiE) is our new preferred partner to provide you with a salary benchmarking tool.

PiE has worked closely with governors, trust CEOs and headteachers to develop a bespoke salary benchmarking tool for education. The tool covers senior executive roles as well as teaching and support roles, and we believe the insights will be invaluable in helping you to make informed decisions on recruitment, reviewing rewards or budget-planning.

One of the inequities in the system we often hear about is the level of variation in how behaviour is managed, in both the support given to pupils who need it and the use of sanctions. This results in the disproportionate exclusion of certain pupil groups.

Although it is the day-to-day responsibility of school and trust leaders to create supportive, safe and inclusive environments based on the circumstances of their schools, boards also have a crucial role to play. They do this in a number of ways that are outlined in new NGA guidance on shaping behaviour management.

Behaviour policy

First, governing boards are in a position to influence the development and implementation of a behaviour policy that supports effective behaviour management. In maintained schools, this begins with a written statement of general behaviour principles that provide a basis for the school's approach to behaviour and discipline, including the use of sanctions. A behaviour principles written statement is not a mandatory requirement in academies, but they are strongly advised to consider following the same guidance.

The behaviour policy itself should be reviewed annually,

providing the board with a regular opportunity to ask challenging questions that ensure the policy is fit for purpose before it is approved, particularly when it comes to aligning it with your vision, ethos and values, but also reflecting best practice developments and any changing circumstances.

Challenge and support should also come all year round as part of the board's monitoring activities focused on the behaviour policy's implementation across the school or trust.

Behaviour management will also feature in conversations on other topics; for example, disruptions to learning resulting from the pandemic. But more targeted approaches are also required to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness



SAM TRANTER
SENIOR ADVICE
OFFICER

of how the behaviour policy is being implemented.

This could take the form of school visits alongside interrogation of relevant data and reports from school and trust leaders. If behaviour is a current priority for the board, they could consider appointing a link governor/trustee for behaviour.

Culture conversations

Boards should also be confident that the culture they want to see in their school or across their trust is evident in the management of pupil behaviour. Therefore, conversations at a strategic level should remind staff about the key principles of inclusivity, diversity, stakeholder engagement and evidence-based practices.

In practice, commitment to inclusion involves making reasonable adjustments, meeting additional needs, and using exclusion only as a last resort. This requires clarity on which assessments and interventions are conducted before resorting to sanctions, while acknowledging that blanket approaches are unlikely to be helpful.

Teaching and the curriculum are also fundamental to behaviour management. Schools and trusts should implement a broad and balanced curriculum that accommodates a range of capabilities, along with whole-school approaches to celebrating the history and culture of minority groups at greater risk of exclusion.

Ensuring diversity in school leadership and staff can also set the tone of inclusion by creating role models for groups of children overrepresented in exclusion statistics – a principle that equally applies to governing boards. 

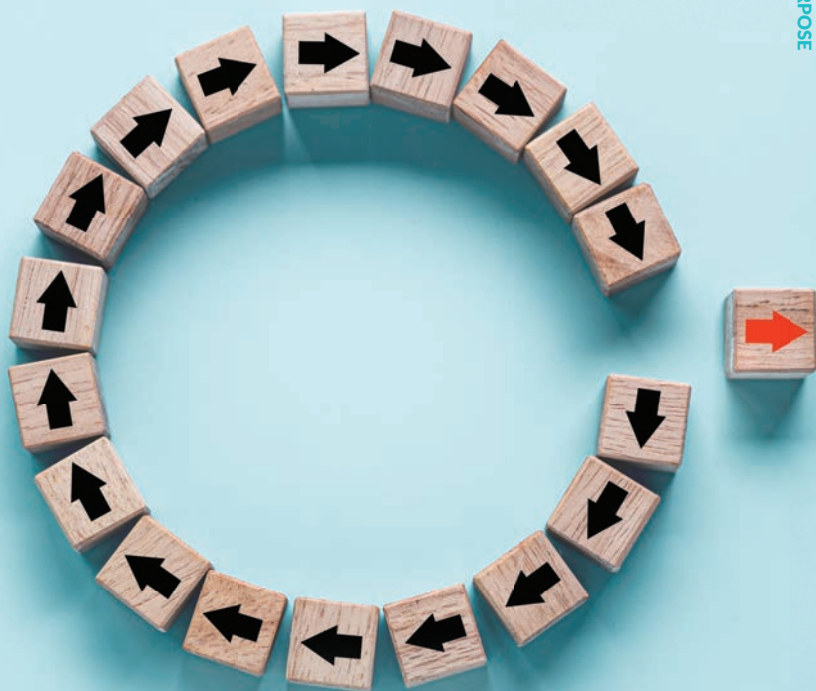


Shaping behaviour

Boards have a crucial role in shaping equitable and inclusive behaviour cultures, explains senior advice officer **Sam Tranter**

Creating a different normal

Now everything's changed, schools need to step into their wider purpose, say **Alex Bell** and **Mark Topley**



Let's reflect on how in 2020 everything changed. And we mean *everything*.

You will have your own stories of how your schools became even more of an essential hub than they already were as lockdown descended on the UK. Truly at the very heart of your communities in ways that extended way beyond learning, often when other support networks weren't there. The digital divide and food, period and bed poverty all jumped ahead of any curriculum in immediate relevant need.

Schools took actions that were deeply significant to their communities. Staff took on a collective social responsibility to an extent not witnessed since the last world war.

As you read this, the country will have increasingly come to terms with COVID-19 and its variants. And the prospect of normal will perhaps shimmer a little clearer on the horizon.

But, just as in the post-war rebuild, we urgently need a different normal for

schools. And a normal that governors and trustees can support their school staff and families with.

Think back to 2020 again: the year that everything changed. Racial injustice arrived at a turning point in response to George Floyd's murder and the Black Lives Matter movement reached communities here in the UK. Gender and sexual

"In 2020, staff took on a collective social responsibility to an extent not witnessed since the last world war"

injustice once again entered communities' conversations following the Harvey Weinstein trial and the #MeToo movement.

But these local responses to global seismic social shifts didn't stop there.

A mental health pandemic among both children and adults, intensified by COVID and the pressure on school staff to be there for their

communities. The stark realisations of what humanity needs to do to save the planet and its children. The DfE announced initiatives at COP26 that trustees and governing bodies will need to respond to, and for which their communities and families will hold them to account.

It's time for a reset. Schools and trusts need to lean into their wider purpose. Not just because it feels like the right thing to do emotionally - it makes hard-nosed economic sense too.

If you haven't caught wind of the Great Resignation across all sectors, you need to get up to speed with the signals about what will recruit, retain and engage school staff. So, whether it's your head or your heart that tells you that everything's changed, it surely is time to step into this wider purpose. 

 **Alex Bell & Mark Topley** are co-founders and facilitators of www.widerpurpose.uk, running hybrid CSR leadership development programmes.

Getting the best out of your governance professional

NGA's clerking development manager **Amy Wright** details good practice for working with this crucial colleague

Too often those providing professional support to governing boards are taken for granted. They continue to tell us in large numbers that the professional recognition and reward they receive in no way matches the skills, knowledge and expert advice they need to ensure that governance in all types of school is carried out effectively.

Our most recent survey, published last year, showed that while there are lots of good people doing good work across the country, it is largely unseen.

The change we need to see will only take place once there is wider sector commitment to understanding what is required and indeed expected of the governance professional, whatever level and structure they happen to be working in. Put simply, recognition for governance professionals starts with the board of governors or trustees.

What is expected

Governance professionals are responsible for the provision of relevant advice and guidance as well as the effective organisation and administration of board

meetings. They should oversee all aspects of governance effectiveness and compliance within the school or trust, ensuring governance adheres to good practice and meets all statutory and regulatory requirements.

The board needs to understand the role in order to initiate provision of an appropriate title and job description, carry out an annual appraisal, ensure rates of pay reflect the requirements of the role, and support induction and ongoing CPD.

The way the role is defined will depend on how the governance professional is employed.

Direct employee

If the school or trust employs their governance professional as a member of staff through

their own payroll, the role will be defined in a role description. Access to appropriate remuneration and training or qualifications will be through the same policies applicable to all staff members at the school or trust. Governance professionals should ensure that where they also take on another role in the school or trust, their annual appraisal or performance review is separated for each role. The chair should lead on, or at least have input into, the review of their governance professional role.

Traded service

A school or trust may employ their governance professional through a traded service, sometimes provided by the local authority or by a separate company. The board will need



to undertake due diligence checks on the service provider and ensure the contract includes processes to quality-assure the service.

Importantly, there needs to be built into the contract the provision of a credible routine to upskill the governance professional and for the board to have an input into the annual appraisal of the individual contracted to serve the board. Governance professionals should check with their line manager about accessing training and also how feedback is obtained on performance.

Self-employed

There are also governance professionals who are self-employed and contract their services to one or more schools or trusts. The contract should detail expectations regarding continuing professional development, and the costs associated with accessing training should be reflected in the cost of the contract. Again, there should be an annual review to provide an opportunity for feedback and review.

Job title and description

However they are employed, the governance professional needs a clear understanding of what is expected of them. The job title should reflect the requirements, level of responsibility and accountability attached to the type and size of their school/trust's governance structure. A title such as 'governance manager' might be more appropriate than 'clerk to the governing board' where the role includes broader responsibilities.

The job description or service level agreement should be reviewed when recruiting a

governance professional, when there are significant changes to the board or governance structure and on a routine basis.

If you are recruiting, in addition to an appropriate job title and description, include in the narrative how vital your governance professional is to your board.

Annual appraisal

A proper development and appraisal system should be a two-way process that gives both the appraiser and governance professional an opportunity to reflect on the previous year and look forward to the coming year. The appraisal should identify both what has gone well and areas for improvement. Once the latter have been identified, relevant support and CPD can be offered.

Reviewing pay

The salary offered should be reflective of responsibility. The role of clerk can vary depending on what the school expects and the professional experience and expertise of the individuals themselves. It is helpful to conduct an exercise in job evaluation in conjunction with a market pricing to compare similar roles in other similar settings. Our research recommends that comparisons with pay should be made with roles similar to an office manager.

Training and CPD

To continue providing boards with accurate advice and guidance, governance professionals need to access effective training. They should be given time and resources to access quality training and keep up to date with governance legislation and education sector developments. 

SUPPORT FOR NEW GOVERNANCE PROFESSIONALS

In addition to the existing modules for governance professionals, NGA has produced a suite of e-learning modules for new clerks to governing boards. These equip them with the basics to start performing standard clerking tasks in any setting: trust boards, maintained school governing bodies, or the local governance tier.

Eight new interactive 'how to' modules on NGA's Learning Link platform provide a comprehensive induction, explaining how they can support boards to achieve good governance in practice.

The whole programme takes four hours to complete. It starts with an overview module before moving on to topics including arranging meetings, managing information and documents, and minuting meetings. Each module includes guidance on practical approaches to clerking tasks.

Provide resources

It is also useful to think about what tools and resources your board provides to your governance professional to help them keep up to date with legislation and policy developments. Consider whether any additional subscriptions to professional organisations would enable your governance professional to access guidance and resources.

Benefits of effective support

If you get the elements of training, time and remuneration right, you are more likely to attract and retain an effective and efficient governance professional.

A governance professional who is supported, respected and appropriately remunerated will in turn effectively support their board. An effectively supported and compliant board will ensure the smooth running of the school or trust and improve outcomes for pupils.

Celebrating the local tier

The local tier of governance in multi academy trusts (MATs) is a crucial point of connection for the trust, says NGA director of policy and information **Sam Henson**

For the majority of MATs, local governance continues to form the bridge between the trust board and its schools. NGA has been making the argument with the Department for Education that its forthcoming schools White Paper needs to tackle the issue of local governance head on and advocate for its importance.

It's been a year since we released our second state of the nation report on MAT governance, MATs Moving Forward: The Power of Governance. Throughout the arrival and development of the MAT movement, NGA has always championed the importance of place and local context. The local tier within MATs is the instrument that truly brings this to life.

We have laid this out comprehensively in our latest thought-piece, MAT Governance - The Future

is Local, which argues that in order to have strong governance of MATs overall, you need meaningful local governance acting as the eyes and ears on behalf of the trust board, building knowledge of the schools to equip support and challenge.

The Future is Local asserts that the sense of belonging to a place is one of the great motivations for those who govern within trusts at local level. By and large, local volunteers are driven by wanting to give something back into the community they care about and have a connection to.

The local tier strengthens governance by ensuring the trust board knows its schools well; it is unrealistic for trustees to be able to achieve this on their own. The local tier provides both challenge and support to the trust board and provides the local face of the trust.



SAM HENSON
DIRECTOR OF POLICY
AND INFORMATION

When working well, the local tier is the key advocate for the trust as well as an important component of school improvement. But getting local governance right is reliant on effective delegation and good communication. The scheme of delegation will be vital for both while making it clear the trust board is the overall decision-maker, and accountability itself cannot be delegated beyond the trust board.

Our annual MAT governance survey 2021 shows almost all MATs currently have a form of governance at academy level, but not all are seen as meaningful in practice. NGA is an adamant supporter of the importance of the local tier



within MATs, and *The Future is Local* argues the case not only for its long-term future, but also that it forms the innovative piece of the puzzle that is MAT governance.

NGA disagrees with the idea that innovative MAT governance can be realised through the removal of the local tier. While not every school within a trust necessarily needs an LGB of its own – the experience from federations shows it is perfectly possible to govern schools well with one governing body for two or three smallish schools – the presence of a local committee within the governance structure, whatever its shape, size and remit, becomes crucial to the

trust board getting to know its schools well.

Paying attention

Local governance has too often been perceived through a lens of community politics rather than enthusiasm for its contribution to central level. A minority of executives and trust boards still see the local layer as an inconvenience in need of entertaining because they perceive an expectation from Ofsted to have it.

The Future is Local argues that the local tier should adapt with the times. Historically it followed a model affording maximum local delegated decision-making. But this carries a substantial risk of

duplicating scrutiny between local and executive tiers.

MATs should be using their best resource – the local tier – for cementing their identity locally. Local governance provides trust boards with a route for mitigating the risks of being an organisation with a single vision trying to mean the same thing to schools when they may be culturally very different.

The local tier can only be an effective route for mitigating that risk if, as a committee of the board, it is being clearly communicated with. Those diligently serving at a local level are aware of the trust board's ability and need, sometimes legitimately, to mix things up. Many within the local tier are known by a name that bears no resemblance to their actual role – this is one of the first things to address.

Community focus

In his book, *Leading Academy Trusts*, the former national schools commissioner Sir David Carter stressed the virtue of the local tier, warning against its removal: “You cannot have a credible vision that talks about supporting and developing school communities if you do not give them a voice.”

One of the upsides of the pandemic was the renewed emphasis on schools as pillars of the community, and trusts maximising this quality. Many trusts have adopted increasingly close links with the various communities they serve, distancing themselves from a rhetoric of elite empire-builders. And from our conversations with schools either not wanting to join a trust or pondering a decision, this mentality is of vital importance for any change of direction in their thinking.

But MAT growth brings a move towards centralisation that usually includes an element of increased control over school-level governance. Few MATs have attempted to remove the local tier altogether; MATs largely remain highly committed to maintaining a form of local tier, albeit with a more centralised, prescriptive approach.

A locally based, well-defined, clearly intentioned model has proved essential to local intelligence. Many MAT trust boards have found they can access greater strategic governance if they utilise the local tier well, helping them to retain a trust-wide strategic focus without getting buried beneath excessive information and unrealistic monitoring requirements. The MAT trustees also have a job to listen when those at local tier level are not happy.

Local tiers featuring stakeholders with local knowledge can scrutinise specific delegated areas in greater depth and feed information up to the trustees. A local tier strengthens external accountability systems, heralding a renaissance of meaningful engagement of communities and parents in influencing school governance.

The pandemic saw the local tier benefit from a refined level of clear central decision-making and direct support from the trust. Being under a formalised governance structure, has brought a sense of comfort to many schools during a deeply troubling crisis.

A reimagining of the local volunteer role can truly maximise the strategic thinking of the trustee board. The local tier, often spread

across multiple geographical boundaries, is the key to the board's knowledge and understanding, helping the trust make the best decisions, and place its schools at the centre of community life.

Success is dependent on getting communication right, especially when trusts have taken on new schools and retain their governors within a local tier setting. Any lack of coherent communication from tier to tier casts doubt over the ability of trusts to meet community needs, breeding misconceptions within the governance structure.

But many MATs have used successful communication strategies to deal with this, including cross-MAT networking groups. The new virtual world makes this easier than ever, and investment in a

senior governance professional role to coordinate this work places trustees' visibility with local volunteers firmly on the table.

New way of thinking

Some MATs are bringing together local governors into priority groups, with very clear attachments to trust-wide strategic priorities. They still form a collective group at school level, but there is a dual focus in that these individuals with focused links also connect on a semi-regular basis, through virtual means, with other school-level volunteers across the trust who also are attached to that same specific area in their school.

But innovation has only been around the edges and it has taken significant time to get to this point. While slow, this is a significant step as MAT governance, with its local tier, is a new form of governance – one could argue the whole thing is an innovation.

MATs engaging positively through the local tier achieve better governance, with diverse voices heard. This can create a collective sense of understanding and active support for decision-making across the MAT. As a post-COVID-19 era beckons, the local tier's viewpoint and community perspective on strategic priorities will be sought to assess the longer-term implications of the pandemic at school level. 

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT FROM SUCCESSFUL LOCAL GOVERNANCE

- a. Two-way communication is crucial – that means regular meetings where the trust board chair can connect with chairs at local level.
- b. There must be a lead governance professional to guide the work of the committees as well as the trust.
- c. The local tier does not have committees – an LGB or academy committee is a committee of the board.
- d. It is understood and respected by all, including the trust board, that you do not remove the local committee simply for being challenging.
- e. Executives do not attempt to control the discussions.



More information

If you have practice to share on how you have made local governance work in your trust, please get in touch with sam.henson@nga.org.uk



Is inclusion on your school's agenda?

Making schools a more inclusive place can help all students have a greater sense of belonging and make better informed decisions about their futures...

Why join the Inclusion in Schools project?

The Inclusion in Schools project aims to support secondary schools in disadvantaged areas in England to address barriers to inclusion that can affect student educational pathways. We work in conjunction with schools nationally to help pupils access a more welcoming and inclusive education, no matter their circumstances – and help make sure that all young people's choices are not affected by barriers that impact subject choice. If raising aspirations is on your school's agenda, our Inclusion in Schools project can help you to drive change and positively impact the lives of young people.

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- Exclusive access to a library of webinars and bespoke resources
- Networking opportunities with other schools
- Dedicated support from a consultant and our wider Inclusion team*
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*for schools which fit our disadvantaged criteria

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Lead and support your governing board to have real impact on your school or trust's improvement

Development for Chairs

This programme provides both current and future chairs the opportunity to develop their leadership skills to deliver effective governance and lead school improvement. The programme offers a blend of flexible learning and will take approximately three terms to complete. Dedicated cohorts are available for those governing at maintained schools and trusts.

Cohorts are now open for registration on our website. The cost of this virtual programme is £249 per participant.

Development for School & Trust Governance Professionals

Level 3 Certificate in the Clerking of School and Academy Governing Boards

This accredited NGA Leading Governance programme is designed for governance professionals with at least three months' experience and currently working in any school or trust setting. It helps develop the knowledge and skills needed for high-quality clerking and is delivered over three terms.

The cost of the programme is £449 per participant.



NGA chief executive **Emma Knights**, alongside colleagues from leadership associations, looks at ways of making a success of the vital partnership between board and executive

Balancing act

Together, school and trust leaders and the governing board constitute the leadership of English schools. In other sectors these roles are often distinguished as executives and non-executives. Although governance models have changed with the introduction of multi academy trusts (MATs), the essence of a successful partnership, which lies at the heart of successful governance has not – see page 12 for more on MATs and the local tier. One of NGA's eight elements of effective governance is 'good relationships based on trust'.

"Whether governing bodies or trust boards, trustees or governors – getting good governance right is key. When it works well, it enables a school to flourish." Andy Walls, National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT).

NGA aims to replicate the relationships found at local level at a national level. With the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), the Institute of School Business Leadership, the Local Government Association and the NAHT, we have produced a much-used document: What

Governing Boards and School Leaders Should Expect From Each Other. The 2022 edition will be published in April, with one version for single schools and another for MATs.

"The past two years have stress-tested almost every part of our education system, including the relationship between school leaders and their governors or trustees. The challenges of the pandemic have highlighted the importance of good governance and how essential it is to have sound lines of accountability that support leaders." Julie McCulloch, ASCL.

The challenges of governance are familiar across time and across models. In theory, the governing board's role largely mirrors that of boards in other sectors, and NGA looks to learn from these – particularly charities, given the status of academy trusts.

Governance literature sometimes states that the board sets an organisation's vision and strategic direction, and hires (or fires) the chief executive, who is paid to deliver the vision and strategy. However, in real life the relationship is much more nuanced. Trust executives or school headteachers are not mere agents of delivery; they are professionals whose judgment the board seeks and tests. The emphasis on holding to account, while important, is only half the picture.

"For good governance, it's essential that school governors, trustees and leaders work closely together and be mutually supportive. That's now more important than ever. They need to look after each other's wellbeing and exercise their duty of care to help ensure their school keeps leading the way and is responsive to the needs of pupils and the community."

Andy Walls, NAHT

Establishing an open and honest dialogue early on makes working together much easier. But if relationships become strained, they can be reset. Executives and boards are united by an organisation's mission: both want the trust or school to do the best for its pupils. In challenging times, reminding all parties they are on the same team and all aiming to achieve this

can bring people together to pull in the same direction. This is absolutely essential to successful governance.

Mutual respect

Respective roles and responsibilities need to be known and understood, and accountability must be acknowledged and accepted. A relationship can then be built on mutual respect and trust. Everyone should know who the boss is, but conversations should not be had in that spirit. A board operating in a command and control mode signals a problem.

"It is often said that a governor's or trustee's role is strategic whereas a school leader's role is operational. Of course, this distinction is not as neat as it might first appear. However, clear accountability is essential, as are strong governance structures that enable confident leadership: it is this that enables school leaders to provide the best possible learning environment for children and young people."

Julie McCulloch, ASCL

Ten years ago, in roundtables or workshops with headteachers, governors were often described as 'do-gooders' or 'amateurs', often prefixed by 'well-meaning', which does not lessen the degree of patronisation. Some were more direct and assumed non-educationalists would be unprofessional or even unskilled. In fact, the added value of the board is built around a strength in numbers that collectively brings diverse skills, experience and views.

I am pleased these attitudes are very much less in evidence now. Pre-pandemic research funded by the DfE reported in 2020 that most headteachers felt positively about their governing board: 89% of executive leaders felt adequately supported and 91% felt adequately challenged and scrutinised. NGA's work shows COVID-19 helped relationships between governing boards and senior leaders become stronger than ever.



“Leaders and governors/trustees can support each other by making sure the right people are around the table, with a good knowledge of what they’re doing and what’s expected of them. There needs to be a firm but friendly chair, supported by independent governance professionals and working with others such as school business leads.” Andy Walls, NAHT

Other indicators also show the profile and appreciation of governance is increasing. It was placed overtly in 2020’s new headteacher standards, and 2021’s NGA annual governance survey shows that more educationalists than ever are volunteering for trust or school boards. It is great to see this as it can help middle and senior leaders develop a real understanding of governance before taking on headship or trust executive post. Mirroring good practice in the charity sector, some chief executives are not trustees of the trust that employs them; understanding the conflict this poses, some have even suggested this change themselves.

“An effective governing board ensures it is able to support and challenge school leaders. While one could argue school leaders never needed the support of governors or trustees more than during the pandemic, governors and trustees will now need to think carefully about how they are going to balance their challenge and support role.” Julie McCulloch, ASCL.

A professional relationship

During the appointment process, prospective heads talk with trustees and governors about building sound relationships. But once in the job, given the myriad of other duties, some may not properly invest time or thought in developing such relationships with the board. This may manifest in other behaviours; for example, not having papers ready to distribute before meetings, failing to provide the requested information in the appropriate format, talking at length in meetings and swamping people with detail, failing to act on board suggestions, sidelining trustees and governors, or involving the board in other pro bono activities rather than core governance functions.

“A strong governance structure allows leaders to look beyond the day job and builds in time for governance and leadership teams to not only look to the future but also build it. This relies on a robust relationship between governors/trustees and the head/CEO, where sometimes challenging differences of opinion in strategy and direction need to happen. The best decisions aren’t always made when everyone agrees.” Andy Walls, NAHT.

Dissent is useful in decision-making. Exploring differences of opinion without escalating into conflict or damaging relationships is crucial. Those entrenched in their views must not stop decisions being made and, although this is the responsibility of all involved,



the chair may need to facilitate the process.

Leading the board

Good chairing is one of the eight elements of effective governance, and arguably the most important – a good chair will make sure the other seven are in place too. This is no mean feat and takes considerable time, effort, reflection and skill. The chair will usually have more involvement than other trustees and governors, but has very little power specific to the role. ‘Chair’s action’ can only be used if a delay in carrying out a function is likely to be seriously detrimental and key matters are excluded. Chairs are not decision-makers; any power they hold comes from influence and presence. NGA’s Chair’s Handbook is a manual for new and aspiring chairs, and a useful introduction for existing and aspiring heads. In 2020 we published research on leading boards, which also points to the need for a vice-chair and for the whole board to share tasks.

The attention given to the chair’s role has ebbed and flowed. Just over a decade



ago, its vital importance was recognised when the then National College for School Leadership was given a remit for a development programme for chairs and the first iteration of National Leaders of Governance were mentors for chairs. The development programme is no longer funded by the DfE even though it has significantly increased its funding for school leaders, but NGA is still offering our Leading Governance programmes for chairs and future chairs. The National Leaders of Governance programme, now run by NGA, has changed to focus on the whole board and, in terms of DfE funding, for those boards that face the most challenges. NGA continues to make the case for DfE funding for supporting and developing chairs and future chairs.

The role of the employer

The 2022 version of the guidance document has more content on the board's obligations as the employer of staff, including development and wellbeing. As part of their regular discussions, the chair

should take note of the head/CEO's work/life balance. When this relationship is working at its best, it can provide inspiration as well as support to the head and CEO.

While good boards value and thank professional school leaders, the paid professionals should also acknowledge the work of the volunteers.

"The challenge for governance boards will be to effectively hold their leadership teams to account and set a dynamic vision and strategy while maintaining morale and engagement. However, by also providing the right level of support and recognising the duty of care owed to their leadership teams, this is a challenge that can be met and won." Andy Walls, NAHT.

It's all about the pupils

The school governance and accountability framework may at first be daunting in its multiplicity, complexity and lack of clear definition, with Ofsted almost always given pride of place by educationalists. However, this needs to be turned upside down and inside out, with school

leaders having confidence in the accountability that arises from being an educational professional. At the same time, investment in the governance role and relationships should render it the first formal line of accountability. The role of the board should be seen as a protection to both the executive leader and the organisation, tackling risks, and not just preventing decline, but ensuring sustainability and success.

"The best schools and trusts know they can't stand still. They have to be brave and have an appetite for risk. The best leaders have always found time to horizon scan so they can provide the best life chances for their children and young people and the wider community." Julie McCulloch, ASCL.

"Governors and leaders alike are accountable to their local community and the children and parents their school serves. So it's vital that governing boards are diverse and representative of their local community, and actively encourage equality of opportunity and equality of outcomes. Together, strong leadership and good governance drive up the quality of educational provision and the outcomes for pupils." Andy Walls, NAHT.



More information

For more guidance on leadership and working well together, visit the NGA Knowledge Centre at www.nga.org.uk/Knowledge-Centre

Schools and trusts with 250 or more employees are gearing up to publish their gender pay gap reports on their website by 30 March 2022. We also recommend all schools produce pay gap reports so leaders and governors can assure themselves of equitable remuneration processes.

A recent report helps you to know more about the gender pay gap and how you can close it.

Why is there a significant gender pay gap?

This is an important, ethical question for governors and trustees. WomenEd, National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT), Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) and NGA collaborated on a detailed report into the gender pay gap. The 2020 School Workforce Census revealed concerning headlines:

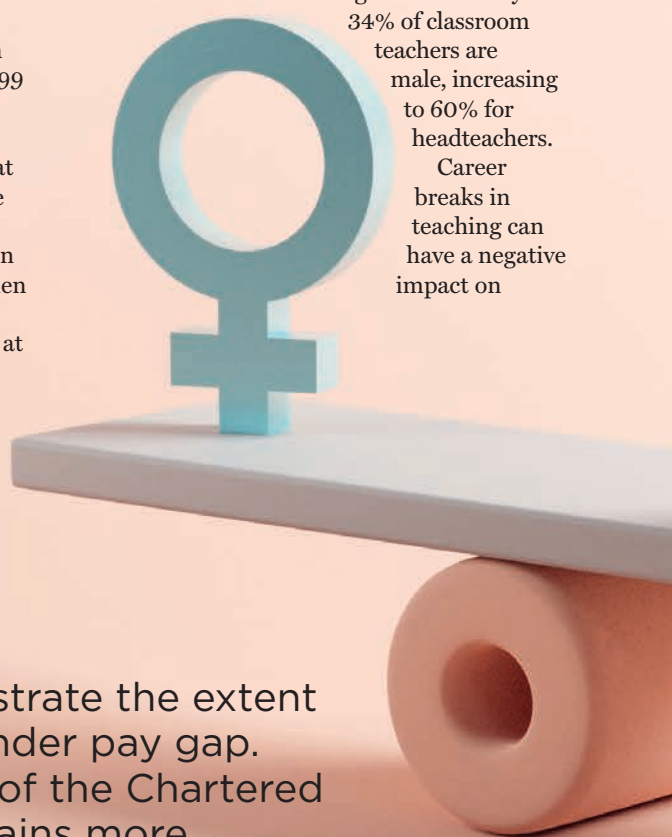
- Women typically earn less than men, especially in leadership roles
- The more senior the position, the wider the gulf becomes. For headteachers, the difference by age 60 and over reaches an average of a staggering £17,334
- The difference is stark for headteachers in secondary academy schools, with men earning an average of £3,399 more than their female counterparts in 2020/21
- A similar pattern is seen at other leadership levels. The divergence point is at age 35-39, with the difference in average salaries between men and women jumping from £2,760 at 35-39 to £4,024 at age 40-44
- Such pay gaps impact on women's pensions. These statistics are worrying as women comprise around 75% of the teaching workforce.

What contributes to the gender pay gap in schools and academies?

A key reason is that women are underrepresented in senior leadership. In primary, 13% of teachers are male while 26% of headteachers are male; a ratio of almost 2:1. A similar picture emerges in secondary:

34% of classroom teachers are male, increasing to 60% for headteachers.

Career breaks in teaching can have a negative impact on



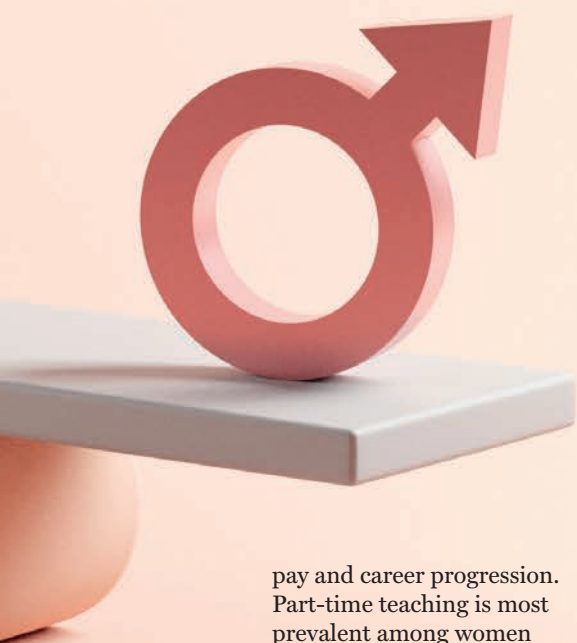
Recent statistics starkly demonstrate the extent and consequences of the gender pay gap.

Vivienne Porritt, vice-president of the Chartered College of Teaching, explains more

Closing the pay gap



“For headteachers, the difference by age 60 and over reaches an average of a staggering £17,334”



pay and career progression. Part-time teaching is most prevalent among women in their late 30s and early 40s. About a third of women teachers in their 50s work part-time, which may reflect caring responsibilities. Women might face a double salary hit if they both have children and support elderly parents.

Many factors in pay systems also lead to inequalities: individuals appointed to different points on the pay scale, different grades or titles for similar jobs, or performance-related pay awarded unfairly. Bias, whether conscious or unconscious, can

influence promotion and pay decisions. Examples include the language used in job adverts, interviewing candidates, returning to school after a career break, and requesting flexible working.

Why is the gap a concern?

I came into education as I believed it was a fair and equitable profession yet one conclusion from the gender pay gap could be that women leaders are not remunerated equitably. In our report, Emma Knights states that NGA is “committed to ensuring boards have all the information they need to do this well without a gender penalty”. Our report helps you to ensure such a penalty is avoided. We analysed the data to track trends and differences across phases, roles, and structures to help you explore how your board ensures fair and equitable processes. And this report focuses on the gender gap as the limited data in the census means it is impossible to explore a range of additional, important factors such as:

- the ethnicity pay gap
- the equivalent for other protected characteristics
- the pay of support staff and school business leaders

Please include such groups when analysing your own pay gaps so you can identify ways to close them.

What can you do to close the gap?

1. Remove requests for a current salary from recruitment materials and reference requests. Natalie Arnett of NAHT emphasises: “When you base someone’s salary on their previous pay, you may

be inheriting gender, race and class gaps and ‘baking them’ into your own organisation”

- 2.** Review your recruitment policy and its outcomes to ensure they support equality, diversity and inclusion
- 3.** If a gap exists, create a plan to reduce it and change your gender pay gap report from a monitoring tool to an action tool
- 4.** Ensure regular review of your organisation’s pay policy and pay-setting procedures
- 5.** Ensure appointment panels are diverse and include women

A leadership imperative

Our joint report aims to spark conversations to inform debate and action to ensure that women leaders and educators are valued equitably for their work. We want the sector to retain more experienced women as leaders and, importantly, our young people to learn about leadership from more diverse role models. 🗣️

RESOURCES

- Equality and Human Rights Commission, Closing the Gender Pay Gap: bit.ly/EHRC-gender
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Amongst Academy Trust CEOs: bit.ly/EDI-CEOs
- McKinsey, How Diversity and Inclusion Matter: mck.co/3hxWGuc
- 10% Braver: Inspiring Women To Lead Education (Sage Publications)
- Reducing the Gender Pay Gap: bit.ly/WomenEd-gap
- NGA on women in governance: bit.ly/NGA-women-blog

A culture of **improvement**

David Weston, CEO of the Teacher Development Trust, outlines four things that matter in teachers' working conditions

As the Governance Handbook states, an effective governor or trustee needs to be able to "foster a common culture, set of values and ethos across the whole organisation" and then ensure "it is reflected" in policies and practice. But in some more recent studies, we can now see that culture is more than just about values, it is a make-or-break condition that determines whether the school is improving.

In 2021, my colleagues Bethan Hindley, Maria Cunningham and I published our working paper, *A Culture of Improvement*, which showed the important role that school working conditions play in supporting and retaining teachers. We also demonstrated the strong association between these conditions and whether the school and the staff working within it are improving.

What matters most?

But which aspects of the working environment matter most? Is it leadership, workload, behaviour or something else? Researchers have struggled to provide convincing answers to this question, in part because it is difficult to measure the quality of teachers' working environment.

In an attempt to make progress, education researcher Dr Sam Sims has recently developed a carefully validated questionnaire that

better captures the quality of a school's working environment. To do so, he gathered survey responses from 1,230 teachers, across 24 schools. Let's see what we can learn from this data...

The vertical axes in Figure 1 (opposite page) show the probability that each of the 1,230 teachers agreed with the statement 'All in all, I am satisfied with my job.' The horizontal axes show the quality of four different working conditions: leadership, behaviour, workload and collaboration. A score of zero represents an average quality working environment. Scores above zero are above average, and vice versa.

Improving satisfaction

Two findings stand out. First, all four aspects of the working environment are associated with improved teacher job satisfaction. Second, the quality of leadership and management clearly shows the strongest relationship with job satisfaction. Indeed, in schools with poor leadership and management, the probability of teachers feeling satisfied with their job drops to just 40%.

What about teacher retention? In Figure 2 (right), the vertical axes show the probability that the teachers agreed with the statement 'In the last term, I have seriously considered leaving teaching altogether.'



Once again, Dr Sims found some correlation between all four aspects of the working environment and teachers' intentions to leave. However, in contrast to Figure 1, it is workload that shows the strongest relationship with teachers' intentions to leave. In schools with the worst workload, the probability of teachers wanting to quit the profession rises to 30%.

What should we take away from this analysis? It seems like schools' first priority should be to eliminate unreasonable workload. You can get a sense of what Dr Sims means by this from the questions that measure workload on the new questionnaire. In schools that score well on workload, teachers tend to disagree with statements such as 'At this school, data management gets in the way of teaching' or 'I am expected to do tasks which do not contribute to pupils' education.'

However, once schools have tackled workload, the emphasis should switch to creating an energised and happy workforce through improved leadership practices. Again, the questions provide some insight on what we mean by this. In schools that score well on leadership, teachers tend to agree with statements such as 'Leaders clearly communicate the reasons for which decisions have been made' and 'Leaders say thank you to me for the work that I do.'

Room for improvement

None of this is rocket science. But looking back at the charts, it is clear that there is still plenty of room for improvement in our school system.

So how can your leadership team check whether you are getting the working environment right? How can you get some more certainty as a governor or trustee?

Figure 1

ALL IN ALL, I AM SATISFIED WITH MY JOB



Figure 2

SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING LEAVING TEACHING ALTOGETHER



“In schools with the worst workload, the probability of teachers wanting to quit the profession rises to 30%”

The Teacher Development Trust (TDT) is collaborating with Dr Sims and is offering this survey to TDT Network member schools to help them self-assess and prioritise areas for improvement. The questionnaire takes less than 10 minutes for teachers to

complete. And the results will allow you to benchmark your school against other (anonymous) schools. In addition, membership offers a short online course for those governing about governing staff development most effectively. 📖



More information

Follow David Weston on Twitter at [@informed_edu](#)
Follow Dr Sam Sims on Twitter at [@DrSamSims](#)
Follow Teacher Development Trust at [@TeacherDevTrust](#) or visit [TDTrust.org](#)

Listening to pupil voice

Elizabeth Collin explains the value and importance of creating mechanisms for listening to pupils and students

We know, through NGA's 2021 governance survey, that pupil mental health and wellbeing is a top priority for school and trust leaders. The reasons are clear, from rising rates of mental health disorders among children and young people to the ongoing impact of the pandemic on their wellbeing.

Surveys like Edurio's (see p26) have given us great insight into the types of issues facing our pupils, and the role school plays in their wellbeing. Evidence tells us that a whole-school approach – where positive wellbeing is embedded across school life – is the most effective way to support pupil wellbeing and those with poor mental health. One of the vital elements of this is pupil voice.

Pupil voice, also known as student voice or pupil participation, means listening to the views of pupils and/or involving them in decision-making. It forms part of the fourth core function of



ELIZABETH COLLIN
PUBLIC RELATIONS
OFFICER AND
ASSISTANT TO THE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

governance – to listen to the voices of stakeholders. Most schools can satisfy the requirements to 'pay due regard' to the UN's Rights of the Child relating to pupil voice with annual pupil surveys or school councils. But going beyond ticking a box on pupil voice activities to embedding a commitment to pupil voice into our culture and in our efforts to address and promote pupil wellbeing can make a big difference. Here's why.

Pupils are the experts

Pupils are the experts of their own unique experiences – they can tell us best the issues they face, their stressors, and what would make their school life better. Their insight is so valuable in ensuring what

schools put in place to promote positive mental health and wellbeing is right for the pupils.

Hannah Kinsey, head of training at charity YoungMinds, explains that "any opportunities for student participation will help to ensure any initiatives introduced are better placed to meet the needs of everyone at school". This could be consulting pupils on what would make them feel safer and supported in school, encouraging peer support, having wellbeing champions or pupils and staff designing wellbeing programmes or lesson ideas together.

Sharing issues

Pupils feeling comfortable and empowered to speak up is also important for safeguarding, and early identification of mental health issues in addition to tackling bullying and promoting inclusion. Worryingly, Edurio's report found just 41% of pupils felt they had an adult at school

"A commitment to pupil voice in our culture and in our efforts to address and promote pupil wellbeing can make a big difference"

whom they trust and can talk to if they are feeling worried.

Kate Harris, founder of VotesforSchools, which creates resources for teachers to have conversations with their classes about issues of the day, explains that having the courage to speak up, to know you will be listened to, that those in authority will respond to what you have to say, is huge when it comes to self-safeguarding. “We put in all these measures to safeguard the children in our care, it’s so empowering to help them build the skills to be able to help themselves too.”

Pupil voice doesn’t need to be used only relating to wellbeing but could be about a range of topics important to pupils. Kate explains that “whether the children and teens are talking about refugees crossing the Channel, spending money on space travel, or the levelling-up White Paper, the crucial thing is that they are being heard.”

Wellbeing through agency

Pupil voice activities also have power in themselves. Multiple studies have shown pupil voice activities promote emotional wellbeing, feelings of agency and independence. Hannah Kinsey says: “Involving young people in the development and improvement of mental health and wellbeing initiatives in schools can bring a number of benefits, including improved self-confidence, social support and increased satisfaction among students and school staff involved.”



Just 41% of pupils had an adult at school they trust and can talk to if they are feeling worried

It’s hardly surprising. Feeling listened to, understood and having a sense of self-efficacy is a vital part of our wellbeing. After two years of a pandemic, this is more important than ever. Instead of having yet another thing ‘done to them’, pupils can have a say and ownership over their own care and wellbeing.

Influencing pupil voice

So much of what makes pupil voice effective is the culture and values of the organisation and this is where governing boards have an opportunity to influence. Our role is about asking those questions about how pupil voice is valued in our setting and promoting an inclusive listening culture.

Here are five questions we should be asking:

1. How does pupil voice feature in our values and vision? Meaningful pupil voice is showing a commitment to listening to the views, experiences and ideas of pupils across the organisation. Do pupils have a say in what they want to leave school knowing, thinking, and having done?

2. Are we listening to the voices of all our stakeholders? A recent survey by TES found that almost half of school staff said they don’t have a voice about how things go at their school. For a listening culture to be authentic all stakeholders need to buy in, to know their voices have value.

3. Do our pupils have the knowledge, skills and understanding to get involved? Pupils should understand their own rights to have a say and be involved in decisions that affect them and be equipped to do so.

4. Is our pupil voice approach inclusive? What pupils are we not hearing from? School councils are a great way of encouraging pupils to be part of a decision-making structure, but often feature only the most confident and engaged pupils.

5. How are we empowering our pupils to lead? To take on responsibility and ownership? From peer mentors to pupil action groups, these opportunities help build important social, emotional and citizenship skills. 



More information

For more information on how governing boards can engage with key stakeholders, NGA has guidance available in the Knowledge Centre: www.nga.org.uk/Stakeholder-engagement. If you would like to share how your organisation supports pupil wellbeing and/or promotes pupil voice, email elizabeth.collin@nga.org.uk

Working on wellbeing

Not promising but not surprising is how I would describe the initial findings on pupil wellbeing from Edurio's Pupil Learning Experience and Wellbeing Review, which I collaborated on. But for those responsible for the leadership and governance of schools, they present an opportunity to help support pupils on their wellbeing journey.

Firstly, less than half of the pupils surveyed reported good overall wellbeing; and one in five reported that they did not feel well. In a classroom of 30 pupils, to have six not feeling well is cause for concern. Additionally, we saw high levels of stress, overworking and poor sleep quality, with the situation deteriorating as pupils get older and some issues reaching peaks during exam years.

It's well established that wellbeing decreases during adolescence, and while some of this may be attributable to the school environment, there are biological and environmental factors at play that are beyond the control of the school.

The report also looks at support networks available for pupils during periods of lower wellbeing. We found that pupils are more likely to speak to parents or friends than school staff when they are sad or worried, and 15% of pupils felt they had no one to talk to at all.

Perhaps related to this, 24% of pupils reported that they felt lonely. This is significantly higher than previous studies

A recent report into the wellbeing of thousands of children makes grim reading, but could also represent an opportunity, says co-author **Daniel Muijs**



Less than half of pupils surveyed reported good overall wellbeing; and one in five reported that they did not feel well

had indicated; Office for National Statistics research, conducted in 2018, identified that around 11% of pupils felt lonely, suggesting the pandemic has had a material impact on young people's relationships and support networks.

Clearly these results are problematic, but I expect they are not a surprise to any school or trust governor. Although the board is not directly involved in implementing wellbeing support strategies and measures, ensuring you are

asking the right questions of the headteacher or trust CEO is important.

In particular, you need to find out whether they know and are monitoring wellbeing of their pupils, and what programmes or actions are in place to support pupils experiencing the greatest difficulties. It is also worth considering how the leadership team is gathering information about pupil wellbeing and how this is informing policy, priorities and allocation of resources to support wellbeing.

None of this is easy, but it's clear that school leaders and governors are already working hard to support pupils as best they can in an extremely trying time. 🍷



Daniel Muijs is dean of the School of Education and Society at Academica University of Applied Sciences, and formerly deputy director at Ofsted. He is the co-author of Edurio's Pupil Learning Experience and Wellbeing Review. Order a free copy of the report at go.edurio.com/pupilwellbeing

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A climate for change



Megan Tate, NGA policy and research assistant, reports on the inspiring work going on in schools and trusts on environmental sustainability

The green agenda is here to stay. In January's Governing Matters, the Department for Education (DfE) introduced its draft strategy to reduce the environmental impact of education and increase knowledge of climate change and sustainability. Leading on environmental sustainability was the topic for our governance leadership forums earlier this term when we heard from a whole range of schools and trusts. The DfE also attended to hear the experiences and thoughts of governors and trustees.

Although some of those who spoke had been working on sustainability for years, many had begun with small projects which have extended into a whole-school or trust approach. It was clear no matter what type or size of school, and whatever the age of the pupils, there are things you can do to benefit the future of the planet and the young people. Some cover all the four Cs of sustainability – culture, community, campus and curriculum – while others begin with one or two.



St Christopher's CE High School, single academy trust in Lancashire

Environmental sustainability touches on all St Christopher's

does, with pupil voice and the school council at its centre. The governing board has invested in the leadership post of director of sustainability, filled by Wendy Litherland.

There has been an emphasis on threading the topic through the curriculum, but also instilling social responsibility towards the planet and its people among pupils. In November, over 100 students took part in a homeless sleepout, raising money for charity and drawing attention to fuel poverty. St Christopher's works hard to create local networks to encourage a culture of social and environmental awareness. Wendy has also led across the region, coordinating the North West Eco Schools Conference to share skills, knowledge and experience in promoting education for sustainable development.



"By appointing a specific governor to have responsibility for sustainability and Wendy Litherland as director of sustainability, we are able to have a regular agenda item at each full board meeting. Wendy briefs the eco-governor, who brings issues forward and on occasion the students come to tell us of their experiences. So, it's very much an interactive process."

*Frank Whitehead, chair of trustees,
St Christopher's CE High School*



South Farnborough Infant School, maintained school in Hampshire

Sustainability has been embedded within South Farnborough's curriculum and classroom practices. It adopted the Harmony curriculum that teaches children how the seven principles of harmony (wellbeing, diversity, oneness, adaptation, geometry, interdependence, and circles and cycles) shape their relationships with nature and each other. Pupils are encouraged to use them to consider how to contribute responsibly to a sustainable future. For example, 'interdependence' was recently demonstrated through a Fairtrade fortnight, learning how their choices as consumers affect others, combined with children learning a rainforest dance routine that relies on teamwork.

"We are broadening children's perspectives. We go from teaching about what's happening locally within the community to what's happening across the world."

*Helen Fletcher-Davies, headteacher,
South Farnborough Infant School*



South Molton Community Primary School, maintained school in Devon

With a motto of 'excellence through outdoor learning', environmental sustainability is a core part of learning and development at South Molton. This is demonstrated by termly 'no electricity' days, inspiring children to get interested and

involved in energy usage. They considered how electricity is created and technology has been invented and developed through history by British and international scientists. It was also an opportunity to expose children to future careers in STEM areas that they may not have been aware of.

"I joined the governing board due to the school's drive for sustainability, including its approach to encouraging children's imagination through learning outdoors and to make a difference in our world. The board's role is to facilitate the ideas senior leaders bring. Budgets and resources are restricted so enablement comes from a mental outlook which the boards can develop and encourage."

Chris Brown, chair of governors, South Molton Community Primary School



St Edmund Campion Primary School, Maidenhead, part of Frassiti Catholic Academy Trust

Headteacher-turned-foundation governor Patricia Opalko began the school's sustainability journey in 2001 by creating a school eco team. This quickly progressed to embedding sustainability within the curriculum by introducing sustainable doorways in the shape of a topic (such as travel and traffic, energy, global citizenship, school grounds, food and drink) that each year group is taught throughout the year, either discretely or cross-curricular.

"The beauty of each year group learning a doorway topic is that teachers don't have



to become experts in every area of sustainability, only the particular area that they teach. But by the time children reach Year 6, they have a good understanding of a wide range of sustainability issues, empowering them to consider how they can make a difference to the world."

*Patricia Opalko, foundation governor,
St Edmund Campion Catholic Primary School*



Hotwells Primary School, Bristol, part of Cathedral Schools Trust

Sustainability at Hotwells began over a decade ago after achieving the silver eco schools award in 2010. Upon joining the board in 2020, parent-governor Michael Martin aimed to make sustainability, specifically carbon neutrality by 2030, part of the School Charter. The board agreed that sustainability be a regular agenda item and Michael was designated governor for sustainability. As an urban school, Hotwells is monitoring air pollution, and 'Big pedal fortnight' resulted in an increase to 72% of children walking or biking to school. A range of smaller initiatives – children switching off lights and recycling pens and paper – fit alongside plans such as choosing a green energy supplier to help long-term change.

"I completed a roadmap outlining the school's work from 2010 to 2030 to acknowledge what had already been done before I joined but also to show that not everything has to be done immediately. It can happen at a different stage of the plan when it may be more manageable."

*Michael Martin, governor,
Hotwells Primary School*



Durrington High School, Worthing, West Sussex

The school has fully committed to environmental sustainability, including it in its school improvement plan, which is mirrored by its trust's strategic priorities. The journey began by replacing pipes in its 26-year-old heating system, improving energy efficiency and comfort levels for staff and students. In 2020, the school built a new sports hall and incorporated 414 solar panels. To date the panels have generated 140,000 kW/hours making the building carbon-negative, meaning it actually creates an environmental benefit.

Durrington is focusing on 'reduce, reuse, recycle'. Understanding that not all schools can access such

"SO POSITIVE AND REWARDING"

It was fantastic to hear from schools and trusts leading the way in this crucial area, providing advice to others at the forums. Having listened to our members discuss what will move the sustainability dial, NGA responded to the DfE's draft strategy: our key point was that government needs to provide funding for necessary changes, especially in terms of premises and leadership capacity, so that change can happen in all schools. This shouldn't require lengthy bids for small pots of money. Boards also need more advice on what to usefully monitor. Thank you to all those who have been championing this agenda which we now need to see as mainstream across the school sector. The message coming over loud and clear is that work to tackle the climate crisis is possible as well as so positive and rewarding for children and their communities; full of hope, joy, beauty and fun!

*Emma Knights,
chief executive, NGA*

large-scale changes, Durrington stressed the smaller changes it has made, including requiring a PIN at the printer to confirm you want to print, drastically reducing waste paper; auto power-off at 8pm on all PCs; cleaners using powdered chemicals to reduce plastic and chemical waste; and meat-free Mondays. It has recently sought a new sustainable catering contract. This will add to its existing and compostable vegware packaging, with the company offering 'generation juice' where children use reusable bottles for drinks.

"Through heating system upgrades, solar PV and LED light replacement, our energy has cost £30,000 less than in 2019, meaning we can reinvest that money into our students."

*Matt Angell, director of operations,
Durrington High School*



The Education Alliance (TEAL), Humberside

In 2019, TEAL identified environmental sustainability as a key challenge for the next 10 years and added it to its strategic priorities. The trust funded a carbon footprint survey that set a baseline and informed a plan for future work. It identified opportunities for improvement, such as LED lighting, which is underway, and also phasing out single-use plastic, heating plant upgrades, electric vehicle charging points and a new waste contract. Some will require more funding to complete.

TEAL has integrated several UN sustainability goals into the curriculum for both primary and secondary schools. Thinking long-term, green careers have also been a focus, securing partnerships with Siemens and Yorkshire Water, offering school leavers the chance to take advantage of new sustainable industries. There is much more planned, including training teachers to link the curriculum to sustainable job opportunities.

"As trustees and trust leaders there are three questions we need to ask ourselves: what can we do that is within our gift; what could we possibly do by reprioritising and not doing something else; and what might we achieve if policy expectations and grants were available to create uplift to this topic?"

Paddy Hall, vice-chair of trustees, The Education Alliance



Eynsham Partnership Academy (EPA), Oxfordshire

The focus on climate change and biodiversity is included in the trust's five-year strategy, and a working group gains insight into how to tackle this. Students came up with their own manifesto as one of the ways they will hold the trust to account. The trust has begun to address energy and carbon emissions by connecting with local initiatives such as Project Leo (Low Energy Oxfordshire). By completing an energy and carbon audit, EPA hopes to create accessible baselines.

Last year, the trust undertook a biodiversity survey of the school estates, followed by actions which they hope to see results from in the coming years. This work is accompanied by a grant from Nature England and the creation of nature recovery networks. It requires community resource to be successful, and the trust is building links outside the schools to harness additional knowledge and capacity and to create wider culture change.

"EPA wants to achieve a trust-wide culture, leading from top-down and bottom-up, and also inside-out and outside-in. It's partly about thinking creatively, and bringing in experts and enthusiasm from the community who want to get involved with schools, and give their advice and time on specific projects."

Rain Newton-Smith, trustee, Eynsham Partnership Academy



Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust, Devon

Ten years ago, with the help of Keith Webber, a science teacher who became school sustainability director, Dartmoor

secured grants from energy companies that funded monitoring equipment, sustainable food initiatives and solar panels, resulting in large cost and energy savings. Most recently, the trust team secured £350,000 through the public sector decarbonisation scheme. This has resulted in other schools gaining air source heat pumps, solar panels and building management systems. Dartmoor has seen great results from management systems, remotely spotting leaks and controlling heating. Susanne Kiff, chief finance and operations officer, has ensured that

procurement of contracts meet sustainable criteria. For example, the executive chef is encouraged to buy locally where possible. The trust has recently appointed Derrick Brett as executive director for civic leadership; he intends to use the local farm to increase pupils' understanding of sustainability and in the future incorporate green careers. The trust has also appointed a lead in learning outside of the classroom and established links with the Devon Wildlife Trust and Dartmoor National Park to encourage primary pupils to experience their local countryside.

"It was a positive choice we have made as a board of trustees to invest in the civic leadership position. I see our main function with environmental sustainability as ensuring the leadership team has the capacity to deliver what is needed. We will support them."

Tania Skeaping, chair of trustees, Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust



More information

Links to resources can be found at www.nga.org.uk/News/Campaigns/Greener-Governance.aspx, and updated guidance will be published in April. If you have any questions, contact megan.tate@nga.org.uk

Good governance requires diversity: it is one of the bedrocks of good decision-making. Also, as public bodies, we are required to have 'due regard' to the Public Sector Equality Duty. The National Governance Association is clearly a passionate advocate for diversity, ensuring its ongoing focus. However, achieving focus can be challenging.

Diversity needed

Effective, empowered governance is an essential component of Wellspring's approach, though our Vision 2025 strategic plan (adopted in January 2021) recognised the diversity of our governance structure needed to improve – especially in terms of gender at senior levels, and ethnicity overall. Although notable progress was made in the diversity of our local governing bodies, only 20% of trustees/directors were female and none were from an ethnic minority background. The board adopted an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy in spring 2021, that expanded on the Vision 2025 commitments.

A key element of the strategy was to improve the diversity profile of the board. Academy Ambassadors provided exceptional support

Developing DIVERSITY for SUCCESS

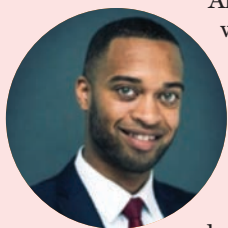
Wellspring Academy Trust's journey to greater diversity included reaching out to organisations outside their usual environment, explains **Karen Froggatt**, clerk to the board

in identifying two excellent female directors, who have both added substantial value to the board. We weren't as successful in identifying potential directors from an ethnic minority background. I'm eternally grateful to a former colleague who recommended approaching BURN – the Black United Representation Network. BURN brings together businesses, black professionals and progressive corporate allies to drive change in diversity and inclusion.

BURN is a franchisee for Board Apprentice, a not-for-profit enterprise that places apprentices on boards for an initial one-year term. After considering our requirements, BURN set about identifying potential candidates for a place on the Wellspring Trust board. This was the first time BURN had been asked to



identify a potential director for an academy trust, and soon realised this presented the same challenges (and development opportunities) as a similar role in a conventional business – particularly given Wellspring’s size and ambitions. Also, the trust’s commitment to its social purpose would appeal to values-driven individuals committed to making a difference.



From banking to the board

Amarron Frederick (pictured above) was identified as a potential board apprentice. Amarron has held a number of senior roles within Barclays Bank; as relationship director for SME business banking, Amarron’s current role involves leading business development and client acquisition for small and medium-sized enterprises in the North West and being the key point of contact for a portfolio of key clients across all sectors. He has extensive commercial experience and a range of banking and finance-related qualifications. Amarron has also had significant experience in promoting diversity within Barclays and is passionate about its importance,

commercially and ethically. Amarron joined the Wellspring Trust board and the finance and resources committee in July 2021 and has already made a substantial impact.

Amarron had engaged with BURN’s network to gain board experience in a different sector, so joining the board of a multi-academy trust wasn’t what he originally had in mind. However, the more he learned about Wellspring, the keener he was to be part of it.

“I was extremely motivated by the trust’s ambitions and extensive success to date, whether measured by its growth, the eight new-builds, the number of schools taken out of special measures, its extensive capital investment programme, or its commitment to living its values,” he says. “It’s a fabulous organisation and I’m delighted to be a part of it.

“Everyone was so welcoming to me,” Amarron adds. “The board and management work closely together and are committed to the trust’s ongoing success. I’m confident I can add value while developing my own skills and experience in a completely different context. I’m really looking forward to what the

coming months will bring.”

BURN managing director Lisa Maynard-Atem (pictured below) was delighted to be introduced to Wellspring. “I was immediately struck by Wellspring’s passion for greater diversity and inclusion, which lies at the heart of everything that BURN does. When Amarron was selected, I knew this would be a perfect match.

“Amarron’s extensive finance experience meant he would be bringing another dimension to the table. One of BURN’s key pillars is leadership: creating black leaders who will take key decision-making roles in all sectors and industries. Our board apprentice programme is a vital part of this. Together, we can thrive and create a



society that works for all. I look forward to the progression of our continued partnership with Wellspring.”

I can highly recommend BURN and Board Apprentice as partners for those who are committed to improving the diversity profile of their governance structure. 🌟



More information

BURN: burncic.org
and Board Apprentice:
boardapprentice.com

WELLSPRING ACADEMY TRUST

Wellspring Academy Trust has 28 academies across Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, having expanded dramatically in recent years. The trust was shortlisted in the NGA’s 2021 Governance Awards

for its vision and strategy and was named MAT of The Year in the 2021 National School Awards, sponsored by the Institute of School Business Leaders and the Schools and Academies Show.



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