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Network News

SPRING
2002

NEW CHAIR for NGN COMMITTEE

Many members will know that during this last year Janis Crabtree had to resign from the Committee and the Chair on health grounds, after two years' very successful leadership of the Network. We thank her for all her efforts on our behalf and wish her well for a full recovery from her illness. Richard Bearman became Acting Chair and did an excellent job in developing the Network and steering the Committee in Janis' absence. We are indebted to Richard for taking on this task and extend our gratitude to him for all that he has done in the past months. At its January meeting, the Network's County Committee elected Judy Leggett as its new Chair. Judy is a governor at White Woman Lane Middle School, Sprowston, and has given active support to the Network since its inception, becoming a member of the County Committee in 1999. We wish Judy well in her new post.

Help Us to Help You

In order to develop effective communication with all governors, and ensure that you receive access to Network information, activity and support, we ask each school to designate one of their governing body members to act as the Network contact and representative. Please do all you can to encourage your school to do this for us. We are also collecting personal email addresses of governors to improve communications. Please can you email barkirk@hotmail.com with your address.

GLAMs

The Network has continued to chair the Governor-LEA-Area- Meetings (GLAMs) which the LEA initiated last year as a means of providing ALL governors with an opportunity of talking directly to senior LEA officers about issues which concern them. So far this school year the main items discussed at the meetings have been:

- The Way Forward proposals
- PFI
- SEN Funding
- Information on intranet not available to home computers
- Teacher Recruitment
- Reorganisation in the Gt Yarmouth area
- Simpler finance arrangements

Education Bill New Regulations

The Government's is now taking legislation through Parliament to implement the proposals set out in the White Paper, *Schools*:

Remaining meetings this year are due to take place as follows:

<i>Wed 13 March</i>	<i>7.30pm</i>	<i>Hamond's High School, Swaffham</i>
<i>Thurs 21 March</i>	<i>7.30pm</i>	<i>Taverham High School</i>
<i>Tues 16 April</i>	<i>7.30pm</i>	<i>Manor Field First School, Long Stratton</i>
<i>Mon 29 April</i>	<i>7.30pm</i>	<i>North Walsham Junior School</i>
<i>Mon 13 May</i>	<i>7.30pm</i>	<i>Edwards Room, County Hall</i>
<i>Tues 18 June</i>	<i>6.30pm</i>	<i>Fakenham Junior School</i>
<i>Tues 2 July</i>	<i>7.30pm</i>	<i>Aylsham High School</i>

Achieving Success. The Education Bill is available to view at www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/pabills.htm As part of this Bill the DfES is currently consulting on Regulations relating to Governing Bodies. A summary of the proposed Regulations, together with the NGC's comments on the proposals, can be found on our website at www.norfolkgovernors.org.uk

Summer Forum

The NGN's Summer Forum will take place on June 29th at 9.30 at County Hall when our speaker will be Susan Falch-Lovesay, talking to us on Environmental Education Issues. Please try to ensure that your school is represented at the meeting when governors will also have the opportunity to discuss matters of mutual concern and interest.

Governor Vacancies

At the end of last term 10% of school governor posts in the County were vacant. 56.4% of such vacancies are currently filled within 3 months, and 76% within 6 months – but this still leaves a significant number of unfilled long term vacancies.

New Clerking Service

The LEA's new clerking service has been operative since last September. 10 clerks have been recruited and by the end of last term some 21 schools had signed up for this service.

New Board for Asset Management

The LEA has established a Schools' Asset Management Plan (AMP) Advisory Board, replacing the previous AMP Steering Group. The NGN will have two representatives on this new Board, which will also have representation from Headteacher Groups, the Diocesan Boards, and officers from both Norfolk Property Services and Education Financial Services.

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New LEA Group makes a start
The first meeting of the Improvement Partnership Executive Group (formerly the Advancing Norfolk Education Partnership) has taken place. Judy Leggett, NGN's Chair, represents us on this Group, and we shall also be sending ten of our members to the meetings of the Partnership Forum which will meet every six months.

How effective are Summer Schools?

The ability of summer schools to improve academic achievement has been thrown into doubt. A recent evaluation by OFSTED has found that teachers are pitching the classroom work too low, so while it might boost self-esteem it is unlikely to raise standards. This follows research two years ago which showed that the literacy skills of almost half the participants in holiday schemes deteriorated. The DfES is changing the funding regime so that, instead of the previously ring-fenced funding, schools will now have the freedom to choose how to spend their summer school allocations, aimed at easing pupils' transfer to secondary school.

Mixed Messages from the Chief Inspector

The Chief Inspector of Schools' Annual Report has recently been published. Its main findings are:

PRIMARY

- Disappointing Key Stage 2 test results but literacy and numeracy targets for 2002 are within reach
- Only 3% of lessons now poor, the lowest-ever proportion
- Nearly half of all schools have no unsatisfactory or poor lessons
- 67% of teaching good or better, up from 64%

SECONDARY

- Significant underachievement in seven schools in a hundred
- Wide gap in girls' and boys' attainment
- Fall in overall attendance levels to 90.9%
- 68% of teaching good or better, up from 65%
- 15 year-olds achieving five-plus A*-C GCSE grades or GNVQ equivalent up from 47.4% to 48.4%

Specialist Schools – the Good and the Bad

A NFER study has found that specialist schools do slightly better than average at Key Stage 3

and GCSE, but that non-specialist schools in the same area as specialist schools achieve lower than average results – despite one of the key aims of specialist schools being to support other local schools. Language colleges do the best at GCSE, followed by technology colleges.

Help for Small School Heads

Following pressure from the National Small Schools Forum, the National College for School Leadership is launching a pilot project in 11 LEAs and 33 schools to tackle the problems faced by the Heads of small schools. There will be a one-year course consisting of workshops and school visits, and issues to be highlighted include how to manage initiatives and time, and how to collaborate by clustering schools. A research project into small school leadership will run alongside the course, looking at issues such as how to combine headship and teaching, and how to manage different age groups in the same class.

New Chief for OFSTED

David Bell is to replace Mike Tomlinson as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools. He is currently the Chief Executive of Bedfordshire and was previously Director of Education in Newcastle. He has also been a Primary School Head, and a part-time academic at the Open University.

New Schools Funding Regime

The DfES Education Funding Strategy Group has been working on the new method of funding LEAs which will replace the Standard Spending Assessment (SSA), scheduled for introduction in 2003/4. The new funding regime will distinguish clearly between funding intended for schools and funding intended for other LEA responsibilities. The formula for the schools block funding will be based on pupil entitlement, plus an enhancement for authorities with deprivation problems and high costs of recruiting and retaining staff. The NGC is part of the consultation on

these proposals and more details can be found on the NGC page of our website at www.norfolkgovernors.org.uk

Concern over Performance Management Funding

Headteacher Associations are expressing strong concern regarding the perceived funding gap in relation to the introduction of the upper pay spine (UPS) for post threshold teachers. They have contacted the NGC which shares the concern that the combination of a cash-limited system and an ill-defined criterion on which to make judgements is likely to cause grave problems for governing bodies in awarding UPS progression points. Further details of the concerns can be found on the NGC page of our website at www.norfolkgovernors.org.uk

Job Descriptions for Clerks

Last year the government made a commitment to review the role of the clerk to governing bodies, and the DfES is now consulting on a draft job description and person specification for clerks as a first step towards raising the status of clerking. Consultations on the draft are being conducted by the Information for School and College Governors (ISCG) from whom further details can be obtained (ISCG@governors.fsnet.co.uk)

NGN Website

Why not visit our website at www.norfolkgovernors.org.uk This provides speedy access to all Network activity, and keeps you abreast of the latest information coming into schools. It also gives you details of the Network's involvement in both LEA and DfES consultative activity.

If you have issues you wish to raise with us, questions you want answered, or comments to make about how we can improve our organisation Contact info@ngn.org.uk or Phone 01493 780023