

Governor Briefing Notes Autumn 2016

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CONTENTS

Briefing Note:

1. Governing Body Agenda Items for the Autumn Term
2. School Finance Update
3. Stop press – items of interest for the rest of the summer term 2016
4. Free School Data Webinars for Governors in Bradford District
5. New Ofsted focus on the quality of the teaching of science and modern foreign languages in primary schools.
6. New School Performance Tables

NOTES FOR FORUM REPRESENTATIVES

You have received these briefing notes as one of the governors representing your school governing body at the School Governor Forums. Building on the format of the meetings held in March 2016 the meetings will continue to give governors the opportunity for sharing good practice. They will include input from governors and schools on topics which have been selected by governors. The Governor Forum meetings will each follow the same agenda and will be held on:-

**Monday 13 June at Margaret McMillan Tower
Or Tuesday 14 March at Eastwood Primary School, both at 6.30pm**

If you have any queries on matters included in these notes please contact the School Governor Service for further information. These notes are designed so that they can be detached and separated as individual documents. Please feel free to copy any of them so you can give a copy of the appropriate note to the Chair of any committee or a particular governor with responsibility for the matter it outlines.

You are not intended to be an expert on all these matters but to have information which enables you to draw them to the attention of your colleague governors. The notes are intended to 'signpost' those issues your governing body may need or wish to address in the Autumn Term 2016 and they are being circulated now to enable them to be incorporated into your meeting plans for next term. Most briefing notes identify a person to contact if your governing body needs further information or advice.

The production of these notes is one of the services provided by the School Governor Service for all schools in the District. Thank you for the work you do in support of your school and its children.

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BRIEFING NOTE 1**Governing Body Agenda Items for the Autumn Term**

Items in **bold** are statutory requirements

First Meeting – September/October
Elect Chair and Vice Chair (dependent on agreed cycle)
Appoint Governor Representatives to attend outside meetings such as the Governor Forum
Ensure completion of Declaration of Pecuniary Interest
Update register of business interests including information to be included on the school website.
Review Membership of Committees, including Pupil Discipline, Staff Dismissal & Staff Appeals and Admissions Committee (if the school is an admissions authority)
Agree, or agree a process for, the appointment of Committee Chairs and Clerks
Agree Committee Remits
Agree code of conduct for members of the Governing Body
Agree programme of meetings (including committees) for the coming year, if not already undertaken in the Summer term.
Appoint named governors including those for Child Protection, SEND and Looked After Children
Agree process for reporting-back by named governors
Review and evaluate previous year's work. Set objectives for governing body for the year and agree governors' report to be posted on the school website
Agree arrangements for the evaluation of the Headteacher's performance including appointment of an external adviser.
Approve Appraisal Policy & Capability Procedures (must be done annually)
Head teacher's Written Report (or at second meeting)
If the school is an admissions authority begin consultation on admissions policy for next school year.
Receive report on 1st Quarter Budget, unless already taken.
Second Meeting – November/December
Review public examination results / national tests (unless taken in the first meeting)
Evaluate effectiveness of the use of Pupil Premium funding for the academic year 2015-16 and adapt planning for 2016-17 as necessary. Ensure website is updated to reflect this
Governors receive annual report from Designated Teacher on attainment and attendance of Looked after Children.
Refer to the relevant Committee the evaluation of the Pupil Premium report for continued monitoring.
Agree targets for KS2, KS3, KS4 (where applicable)
Agree attendance targets
Agree programme and process for review of policies.
Commence consultation on and set holidays for (2017-18)
Agree process for the ongoing review of the School Development/Improvement Plan
Report from Governor Forum
Academy annual report and accounts to enable return by 31 January

Other items which should be discussed on a regular/planned basis:

- Write new policies/review existing policies and agree review schedule
- Reports from Committees
- Governors' visits to school
- Plan governor attendance at training and receive reports from those attending. (Include succession planning for the Governing Board)
- Induction and support for new governors

BRIEFING NOTE 2

School Finance Update

(* indicates that the link is printed in full at the end of each paragraph for those using the paper based version)

1) National Funding Formula for Schools and Academies

Governors will be aware of the Government's announced intention to introduce a National Funding Formula for schools and academies. At the time of writing this briefing note (in mid May 2016), the Department for Education has completed a 1st stage of consultation, focused on the principles of a new formula and the timeframe for transition.

We await a further stage of consultation before the summer break, which is expected to give more details to enable us to calculate the impact of proposals on the Bradford District and individual schools and academies. A new National Funding Formula is likely to affect the budget allocations of individual schools and academies across all phases and there are likely to be winners and losers (and also transition protections and ceilings). Transition to a new formula will begin from April 2017.

At this stage then, governors should be aware that the value of funding allocated to their schools may change, from April 2017. Spending decisions will need to be taken in the light of this. We would expect then that the impact of the National Funding Formula will be an important agenda item for governors at their meetings over the autumn 2016 and spring 2017 terms. Once the detail is published by the DfE, the Authority will provide modelling and further guidance for schools and will also discuss with the Schools Forum the impact on the Bradford District.

Governors are reminded that the agendas, minutes and reports of Schools Forum meeting can be viewed on the Council's Minutes Website [here](#).*

<http://democracy.bradford.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=160&Year=0>

2) Financial Pressures and Value for Money - Guidance

In recognition of the challenging financial context for all schools and academies, in particular due to increasing costs, especially salary costs, without a corresponding real terms increase in the value of funding, the Department for Education has published guidance, and a number of support tools, aimed at helping schools to maximise their financial efficiency. We would encourage governors, working with their headteachers and business managers, to consider and to use these tools as reference in their financial decision making:

- Efficiency and Procurement Guidance / Resources – A suite of materials on financial health and efficiency can be found on the EFA's website [here](#).* Training modules on various aspects of procurement, including effective practice and public sector legislation, can be found [here](#)*and [here](#).* We encourage business managers especially to take the time to investigate these materials and to share the key messages and practices with governors. One very useful simple suggestion is for schools to sort their individual expenditure headings by value (largest at the top), then focusing on securing maximum efficiency in the headings that constitute 80% of the school's total expenditure i.e. focus on the items where greater efficiency / reduced cost will deliver the largest material impact on the school's budget.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/schools-financial-health-and-efficiency>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-training-for-schools>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/buying-for-schools>

- National Spending Benchmarking Tool – this tool has recently been simplified [here](#)*. At its simplest level, the tool will generate charts for main spending headings for similar schools (a school just needs to enter its DfE number). Schools should look to use this tool in their 2016-19 budget planning, alongside the Bradford-specific benchmarking, which can be found [here](#).*

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/schools-financial-efficiency-financial-benchmarking>

<https://bso.bradford.gov.uk/Login/Login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2fSecure%2fCMSPage.aspx%3fmid%3d234&mid=234>

- School Efficiency Metric Tool – This tool [here](#) enables schools to gauge their efficiency based on pupil attainment and the funding they receive (primary and secondary schools and academies only).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-financial-efficiency-metric-tool>

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BRIEFING NOTE 3**Stop press – items of interest for the rest of the summer term 2016****Character Grants**

This year's character grant applications have been opened by the DfE. This scheme began in 2015 to fund schools and organisations promoting traits such as resilience and respect - which are aimed at schools that use activities such as sports, debating or music to provide a rounded learning experience for children. From today, schools, colleges and organisations can apply for a share of the £6 million fund.

Last year's character grant winners included Premiership Rugby, which received £500,000 to use the expertise of leading rugby coaches and players to instil character and resilience in disaffected children. This year's grants also include up to £2 million earmarked for projects with a military ethos, following the success of initiatives like Commando Joe's and Challenger Troop, which use the expertise of former armed services personnel to instil resilience in children.

Applications are open to:-

- schools
- colleges
- universities
- local authorities
- voluntary, community or social enterprise (VCSE) organisations or other profit or non-profit organisations

Proposals must be provided on a 'not-for-profit' basis and must be designed to work within or in partnership with school(s) and/or college(s) in England. The provider must (at a minimum) engage with the relevant school or college where each young person attends to assess whether the proposed activity or provision will help to underpin success in school and work. Schools and colleges are to be named in any bid.

The Aim is to fund a diversity of approaches that will achieve the following outcomes:

- increasing the number of children aged 5 to 16 involved in activities and environments that promote character education
- developing key character traits, attributes and behaviours in children aged 5 to 16 that:
- support academic attainment
- are valued by employers
- enable children to make a positive contribution to British society

We expect all projects to be able to demonstrate that they:

- could in future be adopted or adapted by a school or schools that wish to increase the range of high-quality activity that they offer
- involve joint or consortium working, with involvement of several schools. We expect all projects will involve at least one school rated good or outstanding by Ofsted in the design and delivery of their project
- are sufficiently replicable and scalable to be rolled out across a very large number of schools nationally

Up to £6 million is available to grant-fund projects in the 2016 to 2017 financial year including up to £2 million to fund projects that have a military ethos approach to develop character. There is no pre-determined level of grant award, but, as a guide, grant awards are expected to be in the region of £50,000 to £750,000. Organisations have until 23 June to submit a proposal for grant funding. Grants are expected to be awarded by the end of September.

For a full specification, application form and further guidance go to the DfE website

[Contracts Finder: character education grants](#)

Wraparound and holiday childcare

On the 7 December 2015 the Department for Education published draft guidance for consultation on how local authority maintained schools, academies and free schools should respond to:

- a. parents' requests that the school that their child attends considers establishing wraparound and / or holiday childcare; and
- b. childcare providers' requests to use school facilities for wraparound and / or holiday provision at times when the school is not using them.

The government has now published its response to the consultation.

There were three key areas where respondents wanted clarification:

- setting a threshold and a window for requests;
- rejecting parental requests; and
- rejecting a provider's request.

As a result of the consultation the guidance is to be reissued during this term and the duty on schools to consider such requests will come into effect from September 2016.

Survey of Governors and Trustees

Governors are invited to take part in the annual survey of Governors and Trustees to inform discussions with government and policy makers. Please see the link below for access.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/NGATES-2016>

BRIEFING NOTE 4**Free School Data Webinars for Governors in Bradford District**

School governors in Bradford District can now get to grips with their own Governor Dashboard by logging on to two free webinars.

Education data specialists FFT (formerly Fischer Family Trust) is hosting the online events for governors on Thursday 29 September at 3pm and 8pm. The webinars provide an overview of FFT's Governor Dashboard and how it supports governors in their roles.

Developed in partnership with the National Governors' Association and the Wellcome Trust, the Governor Dashboard is available through FFT Aspire, FFT's reporting and data tool for schools, local authorities and academy trusts.

Subscribing schools download the Governor Dashboard from FFT Aspire, and share it easily with governors. Alternatively, governors can be provided with their own account, giving access to the Governor Dashboard and a range of other information to aid their 'support and challenge' role.

Through simple, six-page dashboard, governors can see how their school attainment and pupil progress compares to the national average, how it performs in different subjects, and whether any specific groups of pupils are under-performing, making it the ideal overview for planning towards Ofsted inspections.

Webinars last for 25 minutes and include question and answer sessions with webinar hosts.

To book a place on the webinars visit <http://bit.ly/FFTwebinar>.

BRIEFING NOTE 5

New Ofsted focus on the quality of the teaching of science and modern foreign languages in primary schools.

In his monthly update Sir Michael Wilshaw has explained the outcomes of recent studies of primary school teaching. While acknowledging the progress made in the last few years, he raised some concerns about the methods used in some cases.

'There is little doubt that the main factor driving this success has been the strong emphasis on improving the basic knowledge and skills of primary school pupils in reading, writing and numeracy. However, a number of recent studies have suggested that this focus on the so-called '3 Rs' has pushed other compulsory subjects, notably modern foreign languages and science, to the margins of the curriculum in many primary schools.

In 2015, less than half of all pupils studied a foreign language at GCSE and, although science is a core subject that should be studied by all pupils to age 16, only 74% of pupils took it to GCSE level to qualify for the EBacc. It seems clear that ... primary schools will need to lay the foundations in these subjects before their pupils move on to study them at secondary school.

With this in mind, Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) reviewed the quality and breadth of provision in science and foreign languages in the primary schools inspected in the last two terms. Evidence was drawn from 340 routine inspections (234 with a focus on science and 106 with a focus on foreign languages). In addition, we took into account the views of hundreds of parents, teachers and pupils.

HMI found that the majority of primary-age pupils enjoy studying science and having the chance to learn a foreign language. However, inspectors also found weaknesses in the provision of both subjects. In particular, in too many schools they found:

- a lack of time allocated to the study of science and foreign languages
- a lack of teaching expertise, particularly in respect of foreign languages
- poor working arrangements with partner secondary schools that failed to ensure effective transition and progression

In around two thirds of the primary schools visited by HMI, pupils spent less than 1 hour per week learning a foreign language. Around two thirds indicated that they spent between 1 and 2 hours a week on science teaching. However, for around a fifth of the schools, less than an hour was given to learning the subject. In one case, pupils said that they couldn't remember the last time they had had a science lesson.

Inspectors found that the best primary schools are capable of providing effective teaching in science, foreign languages and all other subjects, without undermining pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy. It should not be an 'either/or' situation. The best primary schools recognise that providing excellent teaching in subjects like foreign languages and science promotes good literacy and numeracy skills. This complements, rather than detracts from, the focus on English and mathematics.

'...the evidence from this recent investigation has convinced me that we need to put as sharp a focus on the other subjects as we do on English and mathematics. As a result, I have reminded inspectors that they should always be looking closely at the subjects of the wider primary curriculum, including science and foreign languages, as set out in the inspection handbook.

We need to ensure that primary schools are preparing pupils effectively for the more rigorous academic challenges that they will now face when they reach secondary school.'

BRIEFING NOTE 6

New School Performance Tables

From September 2016 the Data Dashboard and the DfE School Performance Tables are being closed down and replaced with new School Performance Tables.

These new tables are already available at:-

<https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/>

There is also a direct link from the front page of the DfE website.

The tables cover primary and secondary schools, both state and private, and 16 – 18 colleges and it is also possible to search via academy sponsor or for all schools within a particular district.

The tables can also be used to look at the results of those secondary schools which opted to report results using the new Progress8 measures. This may be useful for governors who wish to look at the new style of results.

The tables also give information on finance such as the level of spending per pupil and the relative costs of staffing.