

**Minutes of the Meeting of Governor Area Briefing  
held on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2018 at Margaret McMillan Tower and  
22<sup>nd</sup> May 2018 at Eastwood Primary School**

**Present at Bradford**

Shakil Ahmed (Sandy Lane), Sally Birkbeck (Delius), Nick Briggs (Grove House), Dr Ron Butterly (Home Farm), Lindsay Dyson (Stocks Lane), Jean Ellison (St Phillips), Eric Fairchild (Bankfoot, Wycliffe, High Crags), Brent Fitzpatrick MBE (Farnham Primary), Ian Grant (Heaton St Barnabas), Katie Haskett (Stocks Lane), Anne Hedley (Lilycroft Nursery), Jane Holdsworth (St Columba's), Ibrahim Maynard (Newby), Pete Sayers (Thorpe), Val Sherrred (Hoyle Court), Leanda Smith (Stocks Lane), Judy Walton (Hoyle Court), Paul Waters (Eldwick)

**Present at Keighley**

Brent Fitzpatrick (Farnham), Sharron Jowett (The Holy Family Catholic School), Nikki Parker (Parkside), John Cope (St Andrew's), J. Farrell (The Holy Family Catholic School), Lidia Gallucci (Our Lady of Victories), Mark Hughes (One in a Million), Barbara Potter (Victoria), Paul Vollans (All Saints CE (Ilkley)), John Watts (Immanuel College)

**In attendance at Bradford**

D Judge (Education and Employment), Clive Linnett (School Governance Lead), Christina Lowe (School Governance & Workforce), Simon Richards (NGA), Alison Smith/Anne Lomas (SEND Team), Claire Wedderman (Education and Employment). Richard Lait (LA)

**In attendance at Keighley**

Simon Richards (NGA), Clare Wedderman (Education and Employment), D Boxer (DfE), L Frith (DfE)

All were welcomed to the meeting and introductions made.

**The Bradford Opportunity area – opportunities for schools**

Simon Richards (Chair's Development Manager) highlighted the key areas of work the NGA are focussing on with this project, they are;

- Strengthening school leadership and the quality of teaching including rolling out school to school support
- Improving literacy and communication both in and outside the class room focussing on primary. Supporting parental involvement in education
- Supporting careers and enterprise education
- Developing interventions to remove health barriers to learning

**Q; What do you mean by school to school support?**

A: It's about schools helping each other as the central resources are not available any more – to develop a self-improving school system with strong schools helping weaker schools. It is about identifying schools and linking these resources without it impacting their outcomes. It is to provide support at all levels i.e. Governors, SLT, T/A's, TLA's etc. Simon added that Opportunity Areas also focus on social mobility – we want to encourage young people and aspire them to chase their chosen career further afield.

Opportunities through the Opportunity Area Funding include:

- Fully funded NPQ's
- OA backed school-to-school support – this is already taking place across the area
- £5.5m of grant funding for schools to improve Essential Life Skills for pupils
- Funded Breakfast Clubs for eligible schools

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The NGA are working in the Opportunity Areas to identify gaps in governance and Chairs of GB's where succession planning is not in place. The document *The Right People Around the Table by the NGA* – was recommended when considering recruiting governors.

The future chairs programme will:

- Strengthen succession planning on boards with high-calibre volunteers – there have been instances where a chair has resigned with no succession planning in place therefore having no leadership from governance in the school; by using high-calibre volunteers as Chairs/Vice Chairs – it is expected that they will chair effectively after only 12 months from joining the board.
- There will be a board decision to appoint a new governor or develop an existing governor as part of a time-specific succession plan. The NGA would support the candidate and the school will select the right person for them. Future Chairs receive additional support by
  - Providing a copy of the Chair's Handbook
  - Offering access to an Inspiring Governance Mentor (experienced Chair of Governors or NLG who will provide support for the first 12 months
  - Reserving a place on a Leading Governance Course
- Volunteers join knowing they will be expected to become a vice-chair, committee chair or Chair of Governors after 12 months – the final decision of when this will happen is made by the board.
- Candidates go through a telephone screening interview to assess their capacity for leadership
- Free of charge to volunteers and schools – the programme is funded by the DfE

**Q: Where do you find volunteers and how do you assess their effectiveness in the role?**

A: The volunteers are found from Inspiring Governors and through employer engagement.

Those present were encouraged to complete the NGA Governance Survey and give their views before it closes on 11<sup>th</sup> June.

Claire Wedderman – who covers North England for Inspiring Governors – explained that it is not just Chairs and Vice Chairs, there are thousands of potential governors available to fill vacancies by using the free service funded by the DfE. The Governor project will

- Act as a matching platform
- Mapping allows schools to locate potential governors with the appropriate skills
- Provides new governors with support, induction and guidance – via online training

An overview of how the system works is for an authorised user to open the map of volunteers in the Bradford Area then:

- Create a vacancy online
- Choose volunteers of interest
- Invite to an interview
- Meet candidates and hope to match

For further information contact Claire Leman at [claire.leman@educationandemployment.org](mailto:claire.leman@educationandemployment.org)

**Q: Does this replace the scheme Bradford had – they had a list of governors available?**

A: If there is a list in Bradford the two of us can work together to get appropriate governors for the vacancies in the area.

Those present were asked for their opinion of anything further on a strategic level that could be done in Bradford to support governors.

Brent Fitzpatrick commented that it would be preferable to see the School Governor Service mandated to bring governors in to schools that they know individually and well. Clive and his team know all schools in Bradford and know where there are gaps or weaknesses.

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**Q. You work with employers to recruit potential volunteers, what type of employers do you visit?**

A: A number of universities have been visited including Leeds, Bradford, York; financial organisations, Civil Service organisations and professional associates. A piece was also included in the CRPD (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) magazine.

**Q: Have you considered those who are retired also?**

A: I will consider that, thank you – how would we do this in the most effective way?

**I keep in contact with the university as an alumni, I have spoken with other retirees who would be interested.**

A: This could provide a good opportunity to establish a channel to link up potential support.

**Q: Could the Opportunities Area Funding provide support for the SGS or are Local Authorities rules out of the equation?**

A: It could lead to links with LA's, Damian and Kathryn can decide how this resource is used. A conversation can take place with them and Clive.

**Q: So the funding is providing an infrastructure which then supports interventions?**

A: Sustainability also needs to be considered, impact needs to be sustainable to prevent Bradford becoming an area of need once again.

**Q: You mention the young people of Bradford having the opportunity to seek work to suit their skills further afield; if all of the brightest youngsters leave the area – what will happen to Bradford's future, we want them to return and help to develop the city?**

A: It is about those who have developed skill sets for which there are no opportunities in our area; for those who can provide opportunities in the local area we would focus there first.

**Keighley Questions:-**

**Q: How do you match candidates with the Diocese for VA schools?**

A: This varies from Diocese to Diocese. Some have relaxed their requirements a little to get someone with skills. Volunteers can list their faith but can also commit to the Christian ethos even if they do not share the faith.

**Q: What is the success rate in finding the right match?**

A: This varies from area to area – in the middle of Leeds it is easy with 5 invites usually achieving a placement.

**Q: What is the support you offer to new governors?**

A: Phone and email support from NGA and all are given welcome to governance booklets.

**Q: Is any information given that is particular to a governing board? What do you offer that an LGB (Local Governing Board) can't?**

A: It is designed to dovetail with your own recruitment process. Some schools have NGA membership already. The e-learning provided has a balance of information for maintained schools and for academies.

**Q: How does this relate to Governospace?**

A: I have heard of this but have no value judgement about it.

**(After the meeting SGS researched Governospace – it is an online platform for Governors and Clerks allowing access to free of charge resources including analysis tools, webinars and mentor support)**

**Q: This sounds great – have the candidates been checked so that we can trust what they're saying?**

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A: This is not mass marketed and it would be uncommon for candidates not to be suitably qualified. There was a very small number of students who were looking to improve their CV but 95% of users said it was a good experience. Until a GB offered a place there were no DBS checks done but the service gave access to people to whom schools would not usually have access.

**Q: Would it be possible for the volunteers to do the NGA skills list?**

There could be tick boxes when an applicant registered.

The question was – what more do governors need? The mandate to governor services was to identify areas of work and think about where they are investing are they ok or really strong.

**SEND - update from the recent consultation –** Alison Smith (Head Specialist Teaching Team)/Anne Lomas (Head of Sensory Service)

There have been some changes to the way the team support children with SEND. Following a full and rigorous consultation process the preferred option was agreed for transforming SEND specialist teaching and support services. The Team's ambition is to improve outcomes and life chances for all children and young people with SEND across Bradford.

We need to:

- Ensure early identification; early assessment and early interventions for children with SEND
- Make the most effective use of the outstanding practice and provision across the district
- Ensure continued use of our specialist knowledge, skills and expertise in meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND

The new plans include:

- The teaching and support services for children and young people (0-25) who have SEND will be brought together in one service – ***The 0-25 SEND Inclusive Education Service***
- The SEND Inclusive Education Service will be split into two teams, who will work closely together to support children and their families

The number of young people with SEND and complex needs in Bradford has increased by 60%. Schools request more specialist places but the service is now funded differently.

**High-Incidence Team –** for high-occurring needs includes:

- Cognition and Learning
- SEMH
- Autism
- Post-16 transition
- Early Years and Portage

**Q: What is portage?**

A: It is a specific way of working with the under-fives in the home, giving valued support for pre-school-age children.

**Low-Incidence Team –** for low-occurring needs includes:

- Visual Impairment Team
- Multi-Sensory Impairment Team
- Physical and Medical Needs Team
- Hearing Impairment Team

These Teams will continue to support all the statutory work that the council has to provide. Some of the team will generate income, where the work is not legally required and they will look at providing activities such as training, which will help school, staff and partners to better meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.

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There will be a single point of contact for families, children, schools and other settings meaning better communication between services, more efficiency and a more joined-up approach to children and young people with SEND.

The new traded offer is not yet live but will be after the Spring Bank Holiday; it will be published on the Inclusive Education Service (IES) pages on the skills4bradford website. See link below;  
<http://www.skills4bradford.co.uk/what-we-offer/0-25-inclusive-education-services>

**Q: Will the traded services and costs to schools be identifiable on the web site?**

A: Yes, you can 'pay as you go' or subscription packages offering better value will be available to buy; the teams will work with schools around their priorities of need.

**Q: Will support still be offered for those with EHCP's?**

A: The children without EHCP's will be charged for services which previously have been paid via delegated funds. Until this summer charges were only made to academies or free schools – this has provided a model for what the service will look like and how it will work. Schools will be able to secure value for money which is a necessity in this time of reducing funds, by working collaboratively the needs of the schools will be met.

**Q: On a day-to-day basis in schools, without support the teaching staff find it hard to manage, we need to remember our responsibility to all children.**

A: We want to help provide 'quality first' teaching to all children.

**Q: Will there be an extra specialism for children in Range 5 but pre-EHCP?**

A: Some areas will be a challenge for schools.

**Q: How does what you are offering affect Special Schools?**

A: The Low-Incident Team will work in special schools as these schools have already employed a number of specialist staff members.

**Q: What about PRU's?**

A: These units also employ specialist staff.

**Q: How much of this information has been circulated to the SENDCo's?**

A: Messages have been posted on BSO and via SENDCo meetings. Those present were asked to inform their SENDCo's to look out for any information.

Alison added that the restructure has reduced leadership in the team but has provided the opportunity to manage the teams in the best value model.

## **Questions to Anne Lomas in Keighley**

**Q: who is the portfolio holder at the LA now?**

A: Lynne Donoghue is acting in that role – recruitment is ongoing.

## **Improving Attendance**

Clive Linnett discussed how attendance is linked to outcomes and is crucial to success. As governors your responsibility is:

- Approving the Attendance Policy and deciding whether sanctions such as fines and penalty notices will be included.
- Setting targets and monitoring them.
- Comparing attendance with national and local averages and other schools in the same circumstances.

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- Children missing in Education – monitoring as this raises Safeguarding issues. There is a surprisingly high number of children in this category who are not in school and with no explanation of where they are.

Those present divided into groups and completed the following exercises.

**Bullet points denote responses from a different group:**

***Can you identify any actions your school has taken which have improved attendance?***

- Identify attendance issues in Early Years – attendance is not statutory but consultation with parents can take place for some attendance procedures. The re-allocation of some resources – allocating additional staff time for attendance. Building a culture of attendance through pupil involvement. Effective monitoring and actions.
- Increased number of staff liaising with parents. Increased explanation of teaching methods and success for children. Prizes for increased/full attendance. Open up the Reception area to enable staff to deal with issues quickly.
- Class attendance graphs on display and celebrated. Use of school newsletter to update parents about attendance. Send out school minibus and/or taxis to collect children from key families. Immediate follow up of non-attendance via telephone/text with parents. PIW paid for by school to work with specific individuals.
- Attendance Officer delivering talks in school. Attendance awards and certificates on a termly basis. Newsletter feedback to parents. Attendance letter sent home if it drops below a certain percentage. Staff pick children up.

***Have governors received any feedback from parents on this topic?***

- Some parents are unhappy with the auto-generated letter when they had genuine reasons for absence. Fines are more cost-effective than taking children on holiday in term time.
- Positive response from parents whose children could catch the school mini-bus as they were struggling to pay the cost of public transport.
- At parental meetings issues have been made about their children's progress – communication about this link is vital.

***Has work been done to improve relationships with parents to improve the sense of partnership?***

- Encouraging parents to be involved with the extra-curricular activities which also provides teachers the opportunity to raise any issues re attendance.
- Parents are invited to the assembly with the younger children each week. Governor visibility has been provided at parents evening.
- The school can build personal relationships with individual parents. Staff able to communicate in the home language of EAL/NTE families. Build relationships with difficult parents (such as traveller families whose parents are suspicious of the motives of the school – show them we are there for the benefit of their children.
- P.E.T.; Newsletter and working individually with parents.

***Looking at the handout example – is this something that could prove effective?***

- Obviously effective but at what cost? Maybe this could be used for a small number of persistent absentees. The example does not show a personal touch.
- This could be useful if it addressed the schools' individual needs.

***Are there any issues with it?***

- It could compromise any relationship with parents, even alienate them.
- The wording of the terms in the contract could be an issue.

***Do you use penalty notices – if not, why not?***

- Yes.
- Three schools tried and failed on technicalities therefore not pursued.

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- No – parental communication suffices/Yes – when there was a need as attendance was poor – penalty notices can be factored into the data.
- Yes.

***How effective were penalty notices in stopping parents taking children out a second time?***

- They were not effective for holidays.
- No experience.
- Not effective as schools did not get any further, patterns have been developed in some families through generations.
- No experience/not effective.

***How effective were penalty notices in discouraging other parents from taking children out of school?***

- Are governors well placed to answer this?
- No evidence.
- It can be cheaper to pay the penalty. Consistency of use of policies and the use of 'Exceptional Circumstances' would help.
- Not effective.

***Are the procedures for children missing in education followed if children are taken off roll?***

- Yes.
- Not experienced.
- Children are never taken off roll. There is some concern over 'home education' and whether it is actually happening. Specific work to be done with individual families to explain expectations.
- No.

***Are you aware of children who have been taken off roll and being placed back in your school?***

- Yes.
- No examples.
- No.
- Unsure.

**Q: You rightly discuss this with governors but what are the LA doing about the parents taking children out and the fines?**

A: The picture appears to be patchy and it may well be a possibility to have a Multi-Education Safeguarding Team in schools. Some schools have success with the legal process – in one school a family incurred fines of £600 – it is a significant amount.

**Q. Were they able to pay the fine or was it a paper exercise?**

A: It showed the process works

**Q: There is little evidence to show fining works, meeting with the families and discussing it is better.**

A: I agree it is better to take that approach – I will ask someone from the team to attend. Part of the issue in Bradford is the mobility of families, approximately 8,500 cases are dealt with each year who migrate within the UK.

**Q: This exercise links also with staff attendance and illness, can we involve medical professionals to help get to the stages as not all illnesses need absence – for staff and children?**

A: It is about having the right people monitoring absence. A governor can meet with parents alongside the Head teacher – they can then report straight back to governors.

Richard Lait added that if a child leaves unexpectedly, attendance data can be backdated so they are only absent for ten days – most SBM's are aware.

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## **School Governor Service Updates**

- The KCSiE (Keeping Children Safe in Education) document has been updated and will come into effect on 03/09/18 – until that date current guidance must be used.
- Advice has been circulated by the DfE on *Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges* – all schools need to take account of this advice.
- Safeguarding week is 25-29 June 2018.
- Damian Hinds is to announce a new single accountability level for schools. This involves;
  - Replacing floor and coasting standards with a single measure for schools.
  - I'm clear that Ofsted is the body that can provide an independent rounded judgement of a school's performance.
  - This means we will not be forcibly turning schools into academies unless Ofsted has judged it to be inadequate.

## **Date of next meeting**

Monday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2018 at Margaret McMillan Tower and Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> October in Keighley

Those present were asked to send any suggestions of topics they would like to be covered in the next meeting to the School Governor Service.

## **Outcomes of Discussions at Keighley meeting:**

**Bullet points denote responses from a different group:**

### **Can you identify any actions your school has taken which have improved attendance?**

- Attendance intervention including half termly letters re attendance with use of Pupil Premium funding where appropriate to enable more work. 100 children were the focus for 10 weeks and 75% improved attendance at one secondary school. At another school every absence was questioned on the day of return and attendance was discussed at every governors' meeting, including analysis of the data.
- Each year group has a school support leader (SSL) and all absences are followed up individually by phone calls to parents and text messaging as this is an instant form of communication. At transfer meetings all parents were talked to and the expectations around attendance made clear. Parents were made aware that, although the school understood their wish for children to have extended leave, this should always be done outside term time and parents were encouraged to comply with this. There are meetings arranged for families with the highest absence levels and governors attended those meetings.
- Headteacher intervention, including interviews with parents and fines as appropriate. There were also truancy interventions with support offered to families by parent involvement workers.
- Members of staff sent to collect children. Trips for those with 100% attendance, rewards and prizes. A local company was approached to pay for a welfare officer – this ticked their social responsibility box.

### **Have governors received any feedback from parents on this topic?**

- Parent surveys and questionnaires. PASS surveys (Pupil Attitudes to Self and School <https://www.gi-assessment.co.uk/products/pupil-attitudes-to-self-and-school-pass/> this is an online service which can be purchased)
- No. parents at one school don't know who to feed back to. Governors get a report from the parental involvement worker.
- Yes, some care but some do not.

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**Has work been done to improve relationships with parents to improve the sense of partnership?**

- Yes, and the programme includes a meeting with governors.  
Yes, but some parents say it's in their culture.  
Yes, there is regular contact with parents.
- Yes, there is a good, cooperative manner and has had an impact on reassessing school practices and how they affect children.
- There is a parents' evening for each year group, Prevent and other programmes and a parent forum. Coffee mornings and governor drop in surgeries. There is a parent charter.

**Looking at the hand out example – is this something that could prove effective?**

- Not sure.  
This would help governors, not parents  
A good information sheet.

**Are there any issues with it?**

No responses

**Do you use penalty notices – if not why not?**

Yes – from all groups

**How effective were penalty notices in stopping parents taking children out a second time?**

- If they are determined to go on holiday they will do it again
- Not working – visits to pakistan
- Not effective – fines too low to stop parents booking holidays off-peak

**How effective were penalty notices in discouraging other parents from taking children out of school?**

- Not effective
- There is some knock on effect

**Are the procedures for children missing education followed if children are taken off roll?**

- Yes, because of safeguarding issues
- No
- Yes

**Are you aware of children who have been taken off roll being placed back in your school?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't think anyone at either school has been taken off roll.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

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