



# GST Newsletter

Issue 1 - May 2023

## Introduction

With the summer term well and truly underway there have been a few big events/ milestones in the country, Easter, the King's Coronation and most recently the Eurovision Song Contest.

In addition, and more locally, **Westmorland and Furness Council** was established on the 1 April 2023, so welcome to the first edition of the Westmorland and Furness Governor Support Team Newsletter.

## News/updates

The Department for Education (DfE) regularly share **School Governance updates** which provide important news and communications relating to governance in maintained schools and academy trusts in England. As well as the School Governance update, below are some further items which may be of interest:

### **Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) Webinar Series from the DfE**

The DfE ran a series of 4 free webinars to support the statutory safeguarding guidance KCSIE. The webinars focussed on four topics: low level concerns, single central record, safeguarding partners and lastly sexting/online harms. The recordings of the webinars are currently available to view: **Home | KCSIE Webinar Series ([orca.co.uk](https://orca.co.uk))**.



### Guidance on what maintained schools and academy trusts need to publish online

To help governing boards ensure they are reflective of the communities they serve, the DfE is encouraging schools and trusts to publish diversity data on governing boards.

The National Governance Association (NGA) has provided some **guidance/further information** which may be helpful.

### Working together to improve school attendance

Guidance to help schools, academy trusts, governing bodies and local authorities maintain high levels of school attendance, including roles and responsibilities.

### Providing a 32.5 hour week from September 2023

State funded mainstream schools currently offering a school week of below 32.5 hours, are **expected** to work towards increasing their hours to provide at least 32.5 hours by September 2023. This is not a statutory requirement, but was an ambition set out in the governments white paper last year.

### Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance and examples of effective practice.

Governing boards have a duty to promote the wellbeing of pupils, including mental health and emotional wellbeing. Those governing can refer to NGA and Place2Be's **guidance** on pupil mental health and wellbeing as well as a range of **toolkits** designed to address the drivers of disadvantage within their settings.

### SEND and Alternative Provision improvement plan

NGA has **produced a summary** of the government's SEND and alternative provision (AP) improvement plan.

### Role of governing body in school food

The governing board are responsible for the provision of school food. It is the statutory responsibility of the governing body and trustees to ensure the **School Food Standards** are being met to ensure a culture and ethos of healthy eating in school.

### New standards for equal access to sports

**New standards** which ensure that girls and boys are offered the same sports during Physical Education (PE) and extracurricular time in schools has been announced.

PE, together with school sport and other physical activity, supports pupils' wider development including their mental health and social wellbeing. Effective delivery can offer opportunities rich in personal development as well as creating opportunities for increased overall attainment.

NGA in collaboration with the **Youth Sport Trust** have produced a **guide** for governing boards in schools and trusts.

### Trust Quality Descriptors

The DfE has published a draft set of "**trust quality**" descriptions for multi academy trusts (MATs). The descriptions follow the release of the **Academies Regulatory and Commissioning Review** report in March and will be used by regional directors when taking decisions to commission particular trusts.

The descriptions are an expansion of the five pillars of trust strength set out in last year's **white paper**. One of the five pillars was initially labelled as "strategic governance" but has now been expanded to include "governance and leadership" and sets out expectations for both the trust board, and CEO

### Trusts an integral part of school inspections

Ofsted have published a **report** exploring MATs responsibilities and how their work is evaluated during inspections.



# Training

## National Governance Association: e-learning for school governors, trustees, chairs and clerks (governance professionals)

A reminder that the National Governance Association Learning Link (NGA LL) package for all schools will be funded by the Learning Improvement Service (LIS) for a further 12 months. This means that all governors and trustees of schools in Westmorland and Furness will continue to have unlimited access to the NGA LL until 18th April 2024. Many schools have taken full advantage of the NGA LL over the past 2 years, developing their governance skills and knowledge with over 50 modules available.

This significant financial investment into governor training, for a third year, shows the commitment of the LIS to support governors in our schools. Your dedication and commitment as a governor/trustee, contributes significantly to schools achieving the best outcomes for children in Westmorland and Furness. Thank you.

### New Module - Effective finance governance in schools and trusts

This new module explains how governing boards oversee financial performance to ensure that money is well spent (please note: this module has replaced the previously available modules Finance: making the most of what you've got, Understanding schools finance and Managing academy finance, as much of the information contained in these modules is covered here).

It outlines the funding and types of funding schools receive, and how this should be used and managed. It demonstrates what is expected of you and your governing board to ensure regularity, security and solvency and how to understand and avoid some common risks. The module consist of four units:

1. Funding and budget setting in schools and trusts
2. Financial responsibilities of governors and trustees
3. Financial oversight and monitoring in schools and trusts
4. Financial efficiency in schools and trusts

Each unit includes consolidation questions to check your learning, as well as a series of recommended follow up activities which will help to put this learning into practice.

### New Module – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

NGA has partnered with the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) to develop a programme of e-learning modules that focus on creating an inclusive culture through practice and going beyond compliance:

1. First steps
2. Beyond compliance
3. Taking action
4. Measuring impact

The final module, **Equality, diversity and inclusion: Measuring impact**, builds on the learning gained throughout the programme and aims to assess the impact.





## School to school support

Further to our article 'School to School Support' previously, the GST wish to remind any governors/ trustees who feel they may be in a position to provide governance support to other boards, to contact the GST for an informal conversation.

Please contact either your Governor Support Assistant or drop an email to [GST.mailbox.WAF@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:GST.mailbox.WAF@cumbria.gov.uk) to discuss further or if you would just like a little bit more detail.

## Chairs/Clerks (Governance Professional)

### School Contact details

GST would like to remind schools to continue updating GST with changes to chairs and clerks (governance professionals). Having up-to-date information will assist greatly in ensuring boards receive information and communications from GST.

### GST Contact Details

The GST continues to offer advice, support, and guidance, specific to your boards needs and can be contacted as follows:

#### Jane Lees

Governor Support Assistant

E: [jane.lees@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk](mailto:jane.lees@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk) or [GST.mailbox.WAF@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:GST.mailbox.WAF@cumbria.gov.uk)

T: 01228 226925 M: 07768 027244