

## NATIONAL GOVERNANCE ASSOCIATION

### NGA Summer Conference Report

Saturday 8 June 2019

*Etc. venues, St Paul's, Aldersgate, London*

*(Please note, all presentations and details of the Workshop sessions will be posted on the NGA website, which is 'experiencing difficulties' at the moment, so there may be a delay. As ever, my report attempts to record what went on, but it's not verbatim, and also please note that, as there is no longer a list of delegates provided, I've had to rely on luck for names of questioners).*

Maggi Bull, Chair of the NGA, opened the Conference with a welcome to delegates. It was appropriate that the conference was being held in Volunteers' Week. Maggi encouraged everyone to complete the NGA online survey. She also recalled that last year's event focused on the Funding Challenge and reminded governors that NGA had organised a lobby of Parliament in February as part of the 'Week of Action'. She outlined the day's events and thanked NGA's partners, such as NAHT and ASCL, and the workshop leaders.

Maggi then introduced the Keynote Speaker, Amanda Spielman, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Ofsted.

#### ***Amanda Spielman, HMCI, Ofsted***

AS began by commenting that it was good to see so many governors here. She had been a governor for seven years, and although her present role precluded being a governor, she looked forward to getting back to the role at a future time.

She thanked people for engaging so fully in the consultation about the new Framework, which laid out what would be inspected and how the inspecting should be done. There had been 15,000 responses. Pilot inspections were being carried out – the largest pilot ever undertaken, and across all kinds of settings. Inspectors had been training through workshops, and would undergo 5 days of training during the summer. The new Framework was about substance and about integrity, putting the curriculum at the centre of things. AS wanted governors to ask the right questions, and she emphasised that the direction was Evolution not Revolution.

There were four judgement areas: Quality of Education, Behaviour and Attitudes, Personal Development and Leadership and Management.

The Curriculum was at the core of *Quality of Education* and this meant the offer to all pupils. What schools chose to teach, and how to teach it, was their decision. The QoE judgement did include how well the children were doing, of course. National tests would be noted but as a reflection of how well the pupils were progressing, not looked upon as the totality of how children were doing.

*Behaviour and Attitudes* would consider the learning environment and how schools responded to low level disruption and to bullying.

*Personal Development*: there would be no attempt to judge outcomes; it would be looking at how children were developing as people.

*Leadership and Management*: essentially this would be considered as now, looking at how school leadership worked with the children to help their learning. Ofsted was looking for integrity, not short cuts.

Where Governors came in: what governance meant varied now that there was a range of institutions /structures, and governance covered governors and trustees. There were different approaches to what governance was covering. Ofsted judgements should reflect the real world, not an idealised world. Inspectors were learning about different models of governance. However, Ofsted would still be looking at how governors carried out their responsibilities and how they held school leaders to account.

*The curriculum at the centre:* Ofsted was interested in vision, ethos and direction. The curriculum should reveal the ethos and vision of the school. There was no Ofsted specified curriculum. The National Curriculum was part of a school's curriculum but only a part of it: the curriculum should go beyond the NC, and should include extra-curricular activities and additional experiences too.

What was a good curriculum? It should be coherent and have good sequencing, but there was no prescribed model. In discussions with school leaders Ofsted would look at what would help children in later life, what would provide wider personal development, what helped them acquire cultural capital and appreciate creativity. Ofsted had looked at a small sample of schools with well-developed curricula, often in deprived areas, where the curriculum offer aimed at making up for what was missing at home and in home background. Some used on-going assessment really usefully to check children's progress and to fill gaps in knowledge, skills and understanding. These schools did not present disadvantaged children with a pared down curriculum: all children were included in all the curriculum offered.

Local context could lead teachers to have lower expectations of children, but this should not happen. High expectations were important, and schools should aim to encourage all to reach higher – or as high as they were able.

AS did acknowledge that providing a range of rich experiences was difficult with current funding issues. However, Ofsted had seen that many schools were doing so much to achieve a good offer for children, despite the funding situation.

The QoE judgement should make it easier to value schools in different areas, and with different contexts and challenges. It would look at how results had been achieved.

The curriculum should meet the needs of all pupils in a school, including SEND children, for whom sequencing was so important. And for these children (and indeed for all) it was essential that the curriculum was well taught. Curriculum conversations between inspectors and school leaders would be about all the children, and should look at those benefiting and those who may be missing out.

*Leadership and Management:* looking for accountability and challenge.

There had been concern about the over-reliance on data in the past and it was the aim not to see data as the be-all and end-all in future. There had been a mixed response to the proposal to 'ignore' internal data, and there was a worry that this meant that there would be more emphasis on external test results. This was not the case. If children were coming from a broad curriculum, then the exam/test results would take care of themselves. Schools could still use internal data, of course, for assessment, and use to assist consolidating learning, even without this being recorded. AS suggested schools should not collect internal data if this was very time-consuming. She referred to *Beyond the numbers: Making data work for Teachers and Leaders* (S H White 2005). This had noted that there should be only 2 or 3 data collection points in a year.

Another consideration was 'how useful was predicting targets/grades?' There was a superficial attraction in this, but was it useful? AS felt there should be much less faith put in these. 'Flight paths' as a way of communicating pupils' progress were also of concern, as pupils' progress was not linear.

Pupil Premium: Ofsted's would look at the rationale behind a school's allocation of funding and the impact. It did want to know if schools were doing what DfE required. AS felt that closing the gap data was not useful. Instead of looking at spreadsheets, inspectors wanted to visit classes to see how children were working and learning. They would also speak with SLT, teachers, pupils. They would take a broad look, not go down into detail. In a MAT, Ofsted would want to know what responsibility lay with the Trust and what with the LGB; inspectors would respond to /report to where the responsibility lay. In a MAT, inspectors would meet with Chair of LGB, Trustees and Governors.

Safeguarding: governors were responsible for seeing that all was being done right and that there was a clear culture of safeguarding. Ofsted would ask how the school was fulfilling its duty.

In finishing, AS commended the work governors did, the time, energy and commitment they gave. And she welcomed the advice that governors gave through NGA to Ofsted and to Government.

The HMCI then took questions:

Qu 1: (Judith Bennett, Oxfordshire Governors' Association): I welcome the new framework and thank you for coming here today. I am concerned however about one aspect of what you have said. You have spoken of not looking at internal data on pupil progress. I am worried that this may lead school leaders to abandon the collection of internal tracking data, in light of Ofsted's proposal not to ask for it. Governors need evidence of how children are progressing and this data is an important part of our evidence. If we are to be held accountable for the performance of our school, we need the tools to do this.

AS: *Yes, of course governors need this data as evidence.*

Qu 2: (Bob Crozier, Cockermouth School, Cumbria): How do you ensure that inspectors have enough knowledge about how classes are learning and how do they judge without data?

AS: *Data is useful as inspectors can't look at everything. They need to see how the classes match the data; it is a triangulation process.*

Qu 3: (Governor, Christ's College): As governors we need targets for the children so that we can assess how progress is being made. If targets and results don't match, that is our prompt to ask what went wrong. The targets let us see how school is achieving.

AS: *Various models are available to show assessment. Data/targets don't show how children are really doing in the classroom.*

Comment from CC Governor: We still need this information.

AS: *Data only gives you so much. We need to see how children are prospering – this is what is really important. We need to change the conversation.*

Qu 4: (Governor, Manchester): If schools don't adopt the EBacc, will that count against them?

AS: *EBacc might restrict the curriculum and schools should have a wider curriculum.*

*Recruitment in general is a big challenge. There is the bursary programme, student loans, flexible working. Teaching should be a profession that lends itself to flexible working, but there is a lack of this. I'd like to see more job-shares and part-time teaching. It would make it more attractive to returners and may retain others too.*

The Chair thanked Amanda Spielman, and introduced NGA's Chief Executive, Emma Knights, who addressed the conference about *The right people round the table 2019*.

EK began by displaying the *Eight Elements of Effective Governance*, adding that it was very encouraging that, although governance had changed in many ways, the Eight Elements still all applied.

She flagged up a report soon to come out on MAT Governance, which would look at the issues and what solutions could be found.

EK moved on to another document, the NGA guidance, *The right people around the table*. She regretted the title now as it implied that some were the wrong people. It was important to aim for diversity. NGA had realised that its Board was not diverse, so it had looked to co-opt to solve some of the issue – and now there was a *young* trustee!

EK then introduced this year's campaign – *Championing Educators on the Board*. In the past, DfE had always focused on business skills as what was needed by GBs. But now it was acknowledged that there was a need for people with an education background. She asked that governors encouraged Middle Leaders and Senior Leaders to join GBs at other schools. This included the Independent Sector, so that teachers from this sector learned about governance in the state sector.

As regards recruiting governors, GBs could seek help to find volunteers in their locality from *Inspiring Governance*. You could access a map to show how many prospective governors there were in your area.

Anyone 'on the books' of *Inspiring Governance* had access to e-learning anytime, anywhere, through NGA's *Learning Link*.

EK encouraged GBs to interview potential members, and also flagged up the NGA publication, *Preparing your board for the future*, which looked at identifying and preparing future chairs.

The Chair drew the session to a close.

### **Workshops:**

After the break, delegates attended workshops on the following topics: *A conversation with the Department for Education; Corroborating what you think you know; The governing board's role in the curriculum; Managing risk: the governing board's role; and Resource management: maximising what you have.*

*(Workshops presentation slides will available on the NGA website.)*

#### *A conversation with the Department for Education:*

The session was led by Luke Wetherill, from the Governance Unit at DfE, and former teacher. He explained that the Governance Unit's role was to try to co-ordinate the people in DfE working in Governance. He pointed out that if we had heard Lord Agnew speak (and LW had a lot!) we would know how important governance was in his view.

LW explained that he had been in post for 8 months and had spent time listening to governors, clerks, NGA and others. He planned to present slides of different questions and ask for group discussions and feedback. The first slide listed the following:

- *Roles and Responsibilities – clarity over role of governors and clerks;*
- *RSCs: clarity over role of RSC and ESFA*
- *Separation between: Executive leaders and Governance board  
Members and Trustees  
Trustees/Chairs and local governing boards*

Feedback: induction training essential and good introduction before joining the GB.

*Governance Handbook* needed more clarity; it was too woolly; more clarity about accountability role was needed. Suggestion to visit other GBs and invite people to observe yours.

Trust boards and LGBs: loss of powers, loss of delegation could breed resentment; communications issues. (LW acknowledged this – it wasn't working at the moment.)

Key issue was clerking: lack of experienced clerks with skills to fulfil the whole role. (LW flagged up DfE-funded clerks' training.)

Lack of clarity in roles of GB and senior leaders. Governors were clear about their role, but senior leaders frequently were not. Often company secretaries needed training about governance.

Suggestion: move away from the *Handbook* to a Code about what governance really was.

LW agreed that executive leaders needed to understand governance. More emphasis on governance would be in their training in future. He agreed that clerks were essential. The *Handbook* being unwieldy was recognised (it was LW's responsibility). As for a Code, as there often was in other areas, this needed thought. Nolan had been suggested but it needed more than that.

Slide Two: Support for governance sector from DfE.

People were not clear on DfE support. How accessible was guidance? Was there too much or too little? How aware were people of DfE-funded training and recruitment programmes?

Qu 1: How does DfE work with LAs?

*LW: it works with MATs not with LAs, although it does communicate with LAs.*

There were two Recruitment programmes: *Inspiring Governance* and *Academy Ambassadors*. In training, there were both Clerks' and Chairs' Training fully funded by DfE.

Feedback/Comments: Accessibility: the website was clunky so trying to find where information might be was almost impossible, even for young, very IT-savvy governors. (LW 'we find this working at DfE!') *Regulations* are very often incomprehensible.

If you can't find it, you don't know what is there.

Governors use *Twitter*, *Google* or *The Key* for information and guidance.

Slide Three: DfE communications to the sector:

- Are DfE communications clear?
- Do you receive them via a channel/format that works for you?
- Could changes in this reduce your workload?

Feedback: 'Tried to sign up for consultation alerts. However, although I am bombarded by endless DfE stuff, mostly irrelevant, I still don't get alerts about consultations.'

Need better defined stuff sent out, e.g. changes to policies. Clear messages when relevant, not weekly junk.

EK comment: When DfE was asked about a claim that it had consulted widely on an issue, it was discovered that this had meant 20 people, 12 of whom worked at the DfE.

Qu 2: why not contract out the guidance?

Qu 3: Funding: we are expected to plan three years ahead, but there is no DfE guidance on what funding streams may cease, thus giving us further future problems. Can we have guidance on what we can be sure of?

Qu 4: RSC: we never hear from ours.

*LW: There are standardised weekly communications you can sign up to. And termly/bi-termly newsletters.*

Qu 5: What communication and interface is there between DfE and Ofsted?

*LW: Lots and in lots of areas.*

Qu 6: Why not use *YouTube* and podcasts/audio podcasts for guidance and information?

*LW: That's interesting although I'm slightly terrified that it might have to be me!*

*LW suggested we send comments and queries about communications to [dawn.samwell@education.gov.uk](mailto:dawn.samwell@education.gov.uk). (Query from floor: 'Does she communicate with you?' – laughter.)*

**Afternoon:** The afternoon began with a second round of workshops.

### **Workshops:**

Workshops topics were: *A conversation with the Department for Education; Considering the future of your school; Spotlight on disadvantage; Staff workload and welfare; and Measuring what you value: connecting governance and leadership to promote a positive culture in your organisation.*

*(As with the morning workshops presentations will be available on the website.)*

(JAB note on workshops: I attended *Considering the future of your school*, assuming that it would be about inspiring things to aim for in the future. However, it transpired that it was a workshop on how to join/become a MAT. While it was full of information, most of those in the room were already in MATs, so . . . A colleague attended *Measuring what you value: connecting governance and leadership to promote a positive culture in your organisation*, which was full of ideas and inspiration. I am full of regret!)

### **Plenary session:**

Delegates gathered for the final session and the Leading Governance Awards Presentation. NGA Chair, Maggie Bull, and Emma Balchin, Director of Professional Development, NGA, presented awards for the Development Programmes for Chairs, Clerks and Boards. (Details should be on the website at some time.)

The Chair then introduced Professor Dame Alison Peacock, Chief Executive of the Chartered College of Teaching (CCT).

Dame Alison began by thanking governors and sharing a memory of governance. When she attained her headship at a school that had been in Special Measures for three years without any progress, she met the Chair of Governors, who showed her around school. He spent the time telling her that Ofsted was wrong. AP's heart sank. However, he then said that his term of office was almost up, and the skies cleared! The new Chair was absolutely brilliant and the school's progress was because of her input. The school improved rapidly, going from SM to Outstanding in two and a half years, and becoming one of the 100 most improved schools.

Moving to the Chartered College of Teaching, AP explained that she had been appointed as its CE two and a half years ago.

There were so many players in the education sector – local, national, schools, Teach First and similar. There was a lack of coherence, and education was beset by polarised debates about almost everything. She wanted education professionals to have a wide debate, but to do this by looking at a wide range of evidence to see what was relevant to their particular context. And it went far wider than structures – it needed to be done through collegiality. This latter meant for all, including parents and the awkward caretaker. She wanted to change the culture: to build professionalism; to provide time to listen; to require teachers to contribute to a corpus of knowledge, how to learn from each other/share each other's successes, and how to bring evidence to bear.

AP supported the *Framework for Ethical Leadership* that ASCL had shared at the NGA Annual Conference last year. This lay at the heart of what they were trying to do at the CCT.

The College wanted to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

AP then described her involvement with University of Cambridge research project. She had been phoned and asked to take part, allowing researchers to come in and document the progress her school was making. Throughout the phone call, her internal voice had prompted 'don't say yes'. But she said yes . . .

This had been 12 years ago. However, she had learned so much from the involvement and this had led her to the CCT. The aim of the College was collaborative professional learning. What teachers needed was research relevant to their situation. The College sent emails out on sharing research, with the encouragement to 'try this out' in your school.

The College's journal, *Impact*, had an interesting beginning. AP had been told that this couldn't be in a state for regular publication inside two years: it had taken 3 months. (AP did like a challenge!)

So far, 26,000 teachers had signed up to the College, but there were so many more who should be a part of a professional body like the College. CCT aimed to establish Chartered College status across the world. To gain Chartered status, a teacher had to display professional knowledge, professional practice and professional behaviours. These were the performance principles. Professional CCT status for school leaders was also aimed at any teacher who had taught for 10 years.

Governors were important in supporting teachers to join the CCT, and to gain Chartered status, engaging in research and seeking evidence.

Career pathways: membership was for student teachers, early career teachers, experienced teachers and leaders; there was Chartered status and also Professional Affiliate status and Fellowships.

One of the audience spoke about her delight is gaining Chartered status.

Qu 1: Will NPQH encourage this? Where will it fit in?

AP: *A Head teacher should be a head Teacher, and should understand pedagogical research.*

Qu 2: (Ian Courtney, NGA Trustee): I'm a Trustee and Chair of a MAT. I'm interested in keeping people in the profession. How are you liaising with Teaching Schools etc?

AP: *I was at the Inspiring Leadership Conference with Richard Gill (Chair of the Teaching Schools Council). We emphasised that teachers in Teaching Schools needed to know what they were talking about. Chartered accountants had to undertake CPD to keep their status. Teachers should be in the same position.*

Qu 3: I'm worried about membership being optional. It should be compulsory.

AP: *The problem is that teachers had had to join the GTCE in the past, and pay for this. It was Government policy. It was resented as it was imposed and was not a body over which teachers felt ownership. It has*

*been abolished but memory lingers, so we did not want to make membership obligatory. The College had received start-up funding from HMG, but it wished to be independent, so fees would be needed. The aim was to become a Royal College; this was achieved when an institution proved to the satisfaction of the Privy Council that it was a responsible organisation. The College did have a Royal Patron, HRH Prince Philip. However, AP had been nonplussed to hear him ask if you had to be a primary teacher first in order to progress to become a secondary school teacher!*

AP closed with a quote from Maya Angelou: 'At our best, we are all teachers', adding her thanks for allowing her to rant at us.

The afternoon drew to a close with the Chair's hopes that delegates had found the day enjoyable and informative.

*Judith Bennett*  
13.06.19