

ASSOCIATION NEWS –SUMMER 2011

By the time that members receive this Newsletter the Autumn term will have started and this should have come to you as part of the package for your first Governing Body meeting of the term. This is part of a change to what we have had previously and it was hinted at in the equivalent article in the Easter edition. As Governor Support has had to economise by spending less on postage so we too have had to suffer as a direct result. The only option available to us was to have paid ourselves for delivering the Newsletter direct to members home addresses three times a year – and the cost for doing that would have been totally prohibitive. This was announced at the AGM and members agreed that this did represent a sensible compromise.

Being a relatively short term there have not been too many elements to report to members. Early on we enjoyed a very pleasant evening celebrating the achievements of those who took part in the two competitions we organised this year. The winners of the Primary and the Secondary poster competitions assembled at Saltwells to receive their awards from the Commonwealth Gymnast, Ryan Bradley. Ryan also brought along his medals for the children to see and showed a film which illustrated some of the incredible actions in the Gymnastic events within the Commonwealth Games. It was abundantly clear that gravity had been required to take a back seat. We were delighted to receive the support of the Healthy Schools team from the Health Service who provided much financial support throughout the competitions, including prizes of £250 each to the winning schools in each category (The Crestwood School and St Mary's Church of England Primary)

One of the outcomes of our collaboration with the Health Service is that we are being invited to participate with them in other projects aimed at improving the general health of young people in the Borough. We anticipate other collaborations in future with other bodies where there exist clear overlaps with our own objectives.

Shortly afterwards a group of governors from Halesowen and Rowley Regis met with their local MP, James Morris, for a two hour session on a Friday evening at Halesbury School. As James' constituency lies across both Dudley and Sandwell, we invited some Sandwell colleagues to join us for the event. In a good-natured session, James was quizzed on a number of issues of concern to local governors. These included the Pupil Premium, the impact of financial cuts on children with SEN, Ofsted inspections, the changing of the Local Authority, examinations and the ways in which declared results impacted upon schools as well as cases where data had clearly been 'massaged' in such a way as to skew perceptions of individual establishments. A discussion also took place on the subject of apprenticeships in the Further Education sector as well as the increasing amount of responsibilities falling on governors' shoulders. Brief reference was made to the costs of Single Status and Equal Pay issues, the impact of budget cuts on After-School Clubs and University fees. It was

abundantly clear that the meeting could have gone on for much longer had time permitted. A full report of the meeting appears on the DAGB Website.

Further meetings between MPs and governors are being planned and we hope to have at least two during the Autumn term. Notification will be given to governors in due course.

The issue of what have been referred to as “health-and-safety” type checks has progressed and a check-list of these is to be issued for Governing Bodies attention starting in the Autumn term. They include checks on equipment and premises as well as health and safety and at the last count the total of such mandatory checks came to about 120 to be fair most schools will find that only one third to one half of these will apply specifically to them but the total is nevertheless quite significant and, however important these may well be, the time and cost of dealing with them detracts from the principle job of any school. The check-list arose directly from pressure exerted by the Association and we want to make sure that MPs and others who have national responsibility for Childrens’ Services are made fully aware of the implications.

Governors should be aware that their schools are required to have documented plans in place for the Management of Asbestos, Water Hygiene (including Legionella) etc– these are not just the surveys conducted to establish the extent to which each school is (or may be) affected but rather they are to define what the school plans to do in order to eliminate or to contain the threats. These represent yet another set of statutory duties.

The Authority, and therefore every school within it, is being required to address issues surrounding the reduction of carbon emissions. If schools manage to reduce their carbon footprint then there should be an equivalent reduction in the bills they have to pay for gas and electricity etc. Failure to do this may however incur some form of taxation on the school. With this in mind governors should keep their eyes open for any references to the Collaborative Low Carbon Schools Service (CLCSS). During the Autumn term five primary and five secondary schools have been selected as pilots for the installation of smart meters for the monitoring of carbon emissions. The results of the pilot studies will inform the next stages in the process.

Members may be aware that the use of Kendrick’s for building repair work has been the subject of a contract – and that the contract has now gone to Ian Williams Limited, a national facilities management company which has offices in Birmingham. We shall await with much interest the experience of members as to the efficacy of this new contract and ask them to note that a copy of the survey into building work which was conducted three years ago has been given to the new Head of Corporate Property and meetings with him are scheduled for the new academic year.

Although this Newsletter will be read by members at varying times through the Autumn Term, it is being written on the last day of the Summer Term in order to get it in for printing.

There is much to be done in the year ahead and the new Executive will be addressing a number of issues at their first meeting in September – but we remain dependent upon members to advise us of their concerns if we are to be able to address them. Suggestions from the Executive together with ideas provided by the DAGB representatives in time for the AGM (which is reported elsewhere) give us a framework upon which to work. However we always ask that individual Governing Bodies advise us of their own ideas, whether relating to local, to regional or to national issues. These can be communicated through the medium of the DAGB representatives on each Governing Body.

Thanks to everyone who has contributed in any way to the work of the Association during the past year. There is little doubt but what the year ahead promises (or threatens??) to be quite challenging.

Brian Patterson

Chair, DAGB