

ASSOCIATION NEWS – EASTER 2016

Sporting Success for a Local School

In November last, but not previously reported to members, DAGB was invited by the Black Country Consortium to present a prize at the annual Black Country School Sport and Physical Activity Awards Dinner. The judging for the “School of the Year” did not involve us which was always going to have been difficult otherwise since our membership is, of course, for Dudley only whereas the awards cover all four Black Country Boroughs. So, up to the actual announcements made on the evening of the dinner, we had no idea as to whom the prize was to be given.

In the event, the award went to a Dudley school (so just as well we were not on the judging panel), St Margaret’s (Hasbury) Church of England Primary School. Obviously we were delighted with the decision of the judges to give the award to a Dudley school – the citation, read out at the time of the award, was “St Margaret’s in Dudley has set challenging targets and this year the participation of pupils in Out of School Hours Learning has been the highest it has ever been, with 99% of pupils from year 1 to 6 attending an out of school hours club. The school provides 33 clubs in total with 21 being PE and health related. The school has forged links with the wider community including visiting and supporting Halas Homes (*a Halesowen centre for people with learning disabilities*) on their activity open day, giving staff and children the opportunity to work with people who have severe learning difficulties. Targeted and monitored CPD has enhanced staff development and had a major impact on teaching and learning.”

Dudley schools are all doing a great deal to support the whole “Sport and Physical Activity” agenda and the award reflects the extent to which Hasbury has been ‘pushed’ by other schools in the process. Dudley was one of the first authorities in the country in which all primary schools had Primary School Sports and Physical Education data on their websites and, although some entries are more complete than others, it is to be hoped that all will be fully web site compliant before Ofsted finish their web site trawl.

Ministerial Visit

On January 22nd there was further evidence of the good work being done by Dudley schools in respect of Primary School Sport and Physical Education, when the Acting Minister for Sport, the Right Honourable David Evennett MP, visited Greenfields Primary School to see for himself how schools were using the Sports Premium money. He was accompanied by Margot James, MP for Stourbridge. As I was also involved with this visit, I took the opportunity of asking the Minister (in front of 30 or so people) about the future of the Sports Premium funding and he confirmed publically that it was scheduled to continue until 2020.

It has been immensely satisfying to see the work done by local schools in improving healthy activities for young people, especially in the light of negative reports about the frighteningly high levels of childhood obesity in the area, which were the catalyst for our own Healthy Lifestyle Competition.

Sugar Tax

At the time of writing, the Chancellor has just released his March Budget statement which includes references to a levy on “fizzy drinks”. Although the legitimacy of doing so is being challenged by drinks manufacturers the Chancellor has indicated that he wants to use the revenue from such taxation being used (amongst some other objectives) (a) in primary schools to increase the amount paid out for the Sports and Physical Education Premium and (b) towards an increase in levels of sport in secondary schools. The details are sketchy at present but it is clear evidence that the “powers-that-be” are beginning to recognise the value of sport and physical activity not only in the improvement of healthy outcomes for young people but also in their impact upon behaviour, concentration and educational outcomes. If these financial inputs should materialise they will be most welcome in both sectors.

Meeting with Ian Austin MP

On the evening of Friday January 29th a number of DAGB members braved the elements to meet with Ian Austin, MP for Dudley North at Sledmere Primary School. As Ian is not only a member of the Select Committee on Education at Westminster but also involved in the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Educational Governance and Leadership, he has a very high commitment to schools and to education in general. During the course of the meeting Ian fielded questions from members about a wide range of educational issues and he also indicated that some of the intelligence received from those present were new to him and that he intended discussing these at Select Committee meetings. As we have so often maintained it is by events such as this, amongst others, that we are in a position to have some small input into Parliament (but don't we wish sometimes, frequently even, that our influence was much greater !!!!!).

Meeting with James Morris MP

We have also arranged for members to meet with the Member for Halesowen and Rowley Regis at Halesbury School at 7.00 pm on Friday April 29th and details of this are being circulated separately.

Meeting with Pank Patel

On Thursday March 10th a large number of DAGB members had the opportunity to ask questions of Pank Patel, the Regional Schools Commissioner for the West Midlands at our meeting with him at Saltwells. It proved to be quite a lively event and it soon became clear

that many members thought that he was responsible (in part at least) for some of Government policy in respect of the academization process. He made it abundantly clear that this was not the case and that, as a civil servant, his role was to implement rather than to formulate such processes. This meeting took place before the George Osborne announcement about forced academization by 2022 – had that information been in the public domain at the time it seems likely that the strongly expressed views of members would have been far, far stronger and the meeting even better attended than in fact it was.

This Years Healthy Lifestyle Competition

The details of this were distributed to all schools through the medium of the new School Bulletin on February 19th and which included encouragement for schools to take part from Deanne Fishbourne, Interim Lead for Educational Outcomes – we do hope that members will be doing their best to encourage their schools to participate.

Other Items in the News

It seems that when Ofsted decide to look to replace Sir Michael Wilshaw, there is a chance that they will be looking for someone from the United States of America. Why on earth should they feel that they need to look so far away? It suggests both that they believe that nobody in the UK is able to undertake the role and also that they are prepared to risk appointing someone with no experience and little understanding of the UK educational system. Experience with the American Charter Schools might not be the best recommendation for such a role !!!!

The news that the role of parent-governors is to vanish comes as no surprise as it was contained in statements made by Nicky Morgan to the NGA Summer Conference in Manchester last year. That there should be “the right people round the table” in forming governing boards does make sense but surely it would be preferable if that principle could be coupled with the existing categories so as to provide local accountability, something that is diminishing with the reducing role of the Local Authority in education.

We conclude with our thanks to all members for their support and to wish everyone a good Summer.

**Brian Patterson,
Chair DAGB**