

## ASSOCIATION NEWS - EASTER 2018

### Multi Academy Trust (MAT) Governance

In the 2018 edition of the DfE's Governance Handbook the National Governance Association (NGA) is asking for a **fourth core function** for governing bodies to be added to the existing three. Listening to stakeholders-pupils, parents, staff and the community-has taken a back seat for many governing boards with other *pressing concerns*. For the past year the NGA have been trying to persuade the DfE to recognise "ensuring stakeholders 'voices are heard'" as the **fourth core function of governing boards**.

### Public Accounts Committee's report into academies – 30<sup>th</sup> March 2018

*Schools Week* reported that the committee concluded that rules on related party transactions are "too weak to prevent abuse."

The main recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee:

#### **1. Schools should need ESFA approval for related-party transactions**

The DfE's current rules around related-party transactions are "too weak" because it's tricky to tell if someone is making a profit, the committee found.

#### **2. Trust performance should be analysed by geographic area**

The DfE's consolidated academy accounts for 2015-16 did not compare trusts of different sizes or geographical locations. Such analysis would make it "easier to assess performance across the academies sector", the committee believes.

#### **3. The DfE should take action when CEO salaries are huge**

Some academy trusts "appear to be using public money to pay excessive salaries".

**4. The DfE must improve how it will intervene before trusts fail** Education ministers are not doing enough to identify academy trusts at risk of getting into financial difficulty.

#### **5. The DfE needs to be better at protecting school funds and assets if a trust fails**

The committee said the DfE could not clearly explain how it protects schools' funds and assets when a multi-academy trust fails.

### Financial state of Academy Schools

Academies Benchmarking Report 2018 was published by the Kreston UK Charities and Education Group, a network of independent accounting and business advisory firms. The report analyses the health of the academy sector. The key findings include:

- "55% of trusts show an in-year deficit before depreciation for year ended 31 August 2017", doubling from 21% the year before to 42%."

- “Trusts within our survey ... have a combined net deficit for the year of over £100m, however their combined reserves only total £240m. Therefore, it would only take two more years like the one that they have just had to leave the entire sector on the verge of insolvency.” “Staff costs have remained steady at 72% of total costs, but there is increasing cost pressure due to the shortage of teachers and increasing pensions and benefits.”
- The extra £1.3bn announced by the government in July 2017 to ensure that there would be “a per pupil cash increase in respect of every school and every local area” will simply maintain funding per pupil in real-terms.
- “Trusts need to continue to plan for, at best, flat funding levels, but more likely a reduction in real terms.”

The report finds that school leaders have already taken many difficult decisions in order to balance their budgets, but these steps have not reversed the trend of financial decline across the sector. The report concludes that: “our clients are telling us that there is no evidence that the [funding] situation has improved. Therefore, it is hard to draw any other conclusion than the sector will run out of money fairly quickly and will need further support from the Government.

### **Save our Schools Campaign West Midlands**

A growing group of parents, teachers and governors who feel school cuts are unfair and unsustainable are making their voices heard in the West Midlands. Estimates show that 91% of schools in England will see per-pupil funding cut by £3 billion by 2022. To see how changes in education funding might affect your school see [SCHOOLCUTS.ORG.UK](http://SCHOOLCUTS.ORG.UK)

The Dudley Association of Governing Bodies (**DAGB**) has agreed to support and send a speaker when required for Save Our Schools

**The National Education Union** has called for a weekend of action on school cuts on the **21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of April**.

- To organise an action:
- [Order your free resources](#)
- [Tell us what you're planning](#)  
[Check out the action toolkit for more support](#)

### **Gender pay gap**

All UK organisations with over 250 employees are required to publish details of the gender pay gap online by **fourth of April 2018**.

Overall Data analysis conducted by the BBC shows only 11 of 181 calls pay women a better median hourly rate than men. The BBC report focus on one MAT with the pay gap of 59.8% with men nearly 60% more than women. This data according to BBC provides an insight into how many women get into senior, well-paid positions. According to the data from the National Education Union, one reason why the gender pay gap is so high in some schools and MATs is that despite 36% of teachers being men, 62% of headteachers are male.

## **Governing bodies must ensure that no group is being treated more, or less generously than others.**

It is essential that the governing bodies ensuring quality in decision-making. If not done so already, those involved in organisations with over 250 staff should publish details of the gap online. **See** advisory, conciliation and arbitration service and Government equalities office.

### **Under-representation of ethnic minorities diversity in school governance**

Allana Gay co-founder of the BAMEed network highlights the continuing disproportionate under-representation of ethnic minorities in school leadership.

Ms. Gay highlights **school governance** as an area in which diversity can be improved, describing governance as the “ideal place to begin challenging negative stereotypes and restrictive career paths for the BAME community” and notes the support from NGA in approaching this issue. NGA’s *Everyone on Board* campaign, which launches this summer, will seek to address the lack of diversity at a governance level; our annual school governance survey 2017 found that just 4% respondents came from non-white backgrounds.

Anyone interested in the campaign should contact [kirstie.ebbs@nga.org.uk](mailto:kirstie.ebbs@nga.org.uk)

### **Schools and Mental Health Support**

The National Governance Association(NGA) updated 9/3/1 an article by Doctor Pooky Knightsmith who has been a governor at four schools which outlines the **vital role of governors in promoting positive mental health**

THE FIRST STEP should be to adopt whole-school policies and procedures that help staff recognise and respond to mental health and emotional wellbeing issues and self-harm incidents. You may choose to make these part of your safeguarding or child protection policy or to adopt a stand-alone policy.

#### **Policies and procedures that are developed should be relevant to the needs of your pupils and the local community**

- be practical and easy to understand, including in times of crisis
- be a living document responsive to the changing needs of staff and pupils
- be clearly communicated to staff, governors/trustees, parents and pupils
- include a named member of staff to whom concerns should be referred
- contain details of local and national sources of support and further information
- contain guidance on handling mental health disclosures from pupils

It is well worth asking staff, governors/trustees and parents for input about local services and support as this knowledge is often fragmented

#### **Questions for Governors to ask.**

- Is our school a listening school?

- How aware is the school community of the importance of promoting good mental health?
- Do we have a mental health policy?
- Is mental health a part of our curriculum?
- Have staff been trained to recognise and respond to mental health issues?
- Do staff know who to refer mental health concerns on to?
- Have we usefully pooled our knowledge of local support and services?
- Have we considered how best to work with parents and the wider community?

Are we meeting the emotional wellbeing needs of staff?

### **It is important to involve parents and other staff**

If they are given relevant information and sources of support, parents will be able to support and extend what is being taught at school. They may also need to understand why it is important that pupils cover these topics and reassurance that these issues are being tackled safely.

### **Listening Culture**

One of the most important ways to promote positive mental health in both staff and students is to work towards a listening culture. This means creating an environment where pupils and staff feel able to voice concerns about themselves and others safe in the knowledge that they will be listened to and receive support rather than judgment. A listening school which places a high value on pupil and staff wellbeing are:

1. staff and pupils have developed the skills needed to be active listeners
2. pupils can name a trusted adult they could talk to at school
3. staff feel able to discuss pupil wellbeing as well as attainment and behaviour both staff and pupils take a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and banter
4. staff and pupils do not feel ashamed to ask for help or support
5. sources of support are clearly signposted verbally, visually and online

### **Sexual Harassment in Schools**

Sexual harassment seen as 'normal' in schools,

The updated [keeping children safe in education](#) document, which has already been published online by the education department, requires schools to have regard to problems like sexting, abuse and online safety, **but not sexism.**

#### **Governors need to:**

Define sexual violence and sexual harassment.

Familiarise the Schools' legal responsibilities.

Pursue a whole school approach to prevention

Respond to reports

Sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools will only be reduced through a whole school approach which must involve all students, governors and parents, in addition to local child safeguarding bodies, police and specialist third sector organisations. Schools need guidance on how to implement this approach effectively

Almost four in 10 female pupils have suffered sexual harassment at school, in some cases amounting to sexual assault, in an education system where sexism is “endemic” and misogynistic language is routinely used.

A study commissioned by the National Education Union and UK Feminista, a gender equality campaign group, was done by the **Institute of Employment at the University of Warwick**.

It reveals how 37 per cent of female secondary school pupils have suffered some form of sexual harassment at school. There are 1.4 million girls aged 11 to 15 in state-funded secondary schools in England.

The research, based on surveys with 1,508 secondary school pupils and 1,634 teachers at secondary and primary schools in England and Wales, shows that girls are [six times more likely than boys to have been sexually harassed](#) at school. Six per cent of boys report having experienced sexual harassment.

The report described sexism in schools as “endemic”. It stated that almost a quarter (24 per cent) of female pupils had been subjected to “unwanted physical touching of a sexual nature” while at school.

It adds that “sexual harassment is highly prevalent in schools” and has been experienced or witnessed by more than half (58 per cent) of female pupils.

“Boys often lift skirts up and whistle and treat girls in a sexual manner and nothing gets done about it,” one girl, who took part in the research, said. The government has said that it will be publishing detailed advice this term addressing sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools.

### **Female teachers targeted**

The report found that sexual harassment also affects teachers. One anonymous secondary school teacher said: “Female teachers have been sexually assaulted by male pupils in corridors and classrooms. This often happens when there’s a crowd or disruption so that they are more likely to get away without getting caught or identified.”

Almost one in three (32 per cent) teachers in mixed-sex secondary schools witness sexual harassment in their school on at least a weekly basis. A further 36 per cent say they witness it on a termly basis. This comes just months after the Times Educational Supplement (Tes) [Tes revealed](#) the scale of sexual abuse in schools.

Yet there is a “vicious cycle of under-reporting of sexism in schools” according to the report. One reason is that pupils do not believe teachers “would take reports of sexism and sexual harassment seriously”. Sexism and sexual harassment in schools

“has been normalised” and fewer than one in seven pupils who have been sexually harassed report it to a teacher.

More than one in four (27 per cent) of secondary school teachers admit they would not feel confident tackling a sexist incident, states the report. “Teachers do not know what to do. Teachers desperately need training on how to respond to sexism and sexual negativity,” according to one secondary school teacher quoted in the report. They comment: “I have seen boys mime raping girls and just been kept back at lunch for a detention, no explanation given to them other than when I made myself involved”.

### **'Zero tolerance'**

Schools need to take a “zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment” and “adopt a ‘whole-school approach’ to tackling sexism,” the report recommends.

It calls on the government to issue guidance on sexual harassment and sexual violence, set up a fund to support organisations working with schools to tackle the problem and ensure the sex and relationships education curriculum is designed to prevent sexism and sexual harassment.

**Ofsted** should recognise schools that are making progress in dealing with the issue and dealing with sexism should be a compulsory part of teacher training, it adds.

Kevin Courtney, NEU joint general secretary, said: “We must address the gender stereotypes and the ideas about men and women that lead to such prevalent levels of sexual harassment.

“The government, alongside the profession, needs to develop teacher training about the best ways to reduce sexism in the classroom and to use the formal and informal curriculum to make a difference for girls and boys”.

Sophie Bennett, spokesperson for UK Feminista, said that addressing sexual harassment would “transform school life”.

“We need to stop schools being places where girls and boys learn that sexual harassment and sexism are routine, normal, accepted. It would transform school life – and society as a whole,” she said.

**'Schools should be safe'** The report’s findings come after a report by the Women and Equalities Committee published a report on [sexual harassment in schools](#) last year.

A Department for Education spokesperson said “Schools should be safe places, free from sexual violence and harassment. Schools are under a legal duty to protect their children and government guidance is clear that schools must have an effective child protection policy that addresses peer on peer abuse.”

“To make sure we help schools to do all they can to address this we will be publishing detailed advice this term, specifically covering sexual violence and sexual

harassment between children in schools. We will also launch a consultation this term on updated guidance which will come into force next September.”

An Ofsted spokesperson said: “We are currently supporting a University of Bedfordshire research project looking at harmful sexual behaviour in schools. The report will be published next year and relevant findings will be considered as we develop our **new inspection framework for 2019.**”

Jim Conway

Vice-Chair, DAGB