

News From The Association

At the time of writing we have (just) had the privilege of enjoying an Area Meeting at which Emma Knights (Chief Executive of the National Governors' Association) talked to us about the changes brought about with the 2011 Education Act and the current "state of play" with regard to the Special Educational Needs green paper. Many of the changes, including those involving the Ofsted Inspection regime are gradually becoming more familiar to us but some less so.

The 2011 Education Act

As from September 2012, Governing Bodies will have (enjoy?) greater freedom to change their structure and size, subject to there being a minimum of two parent governors, one staff governor and one (local) authority governor and a minimum size of seven. These are permissive rather than mandatory so that many Governing Bodies will doubtless remain, more or less, as they are currently.

No longer will schools be required to maintain the School Profile nor is there any need for a Local Authority to provide a School Improvement Partner (SIP) although schools are still required to appoint an external adviser for the Performance Management of the Head Teacher.

There will be higher targets to be attained which will require at least 60% of all primary children to achieve Level 4 in both English and Mathematics and at least 40% of all secondary students to secure at least 5 GCSE passes at grades A* to C (including English and Mathematics) in 2012, this latter figure to be increased to 50% by 2015.

The powers of school staff to search students have been modified but it will still be the responsibility of individual schools to establish discipline and behaviour policies.

The law as it relates to exclusions is also modified and this will include the existence of an independent review panel which may uphold the decision of the Governing Body concerning the exclusion of a pupil but which may alternatively quash that decision and require the Governing Body to reconsider its decision. In that latter case if the Governing Body should decide ***not*** to reinstate the pupil then the review panel would have the power to "*direct that the school's budget be adjusted*" (a latest figure of £4000 has been suggested as the ~~fine~~ (sorry, adjustment)).

There are numerous other changes (including the confirmed abolition of the General Teaching Council (England) despite the continued existence of GTCs elsewhere in the rest of the UK). Importantly any teacher accused of a criminal offence by a pupil, or on behalf of a pupil will have anonymity in any published material (e.g. local newspapers) and it will be a criminal offence to publish the information without the consent of the court. Whilst this is welcome (since the majority of such accusations prove to be false or malicious) it still does not resolve the problem entirely since it may well be difficult, if not well nigh impossible, to stop pupils talking to each other and to their parents.

Interestingly, Local Authority maintained schools must provide independent careers guidance for pupils aged 14 to 16 –no longer can this be given either by a teacher or by anyone employed by the school. The Local Authority no longer is required to maintain a Local Admissions Forum but relevant admissions issues may now be referred to the School's

Adjudicator. At any time that a new school is required it must, predictably, be established either as an Academy or as a Free School.

The raising of the school leaving age confirms that from 2013 young people *must* participate in education or training until the age of 17 and to 18 by the year 2015.

“Healthy Lifestyle” Competition 2012

At the time of writing several more weeks have to elapse before entries for this year’s competition have to be received. However the generosity of the Healthy Schools team should be acknowledged – as they are responsible for the prizes to be awarded. The format this year is quite different and school teams are bidding for two “artist residencies” (one for primary schools and one for secondary schools). The winners will have an artist in residence at their school for the equivalent of a whole week during which time the team, working with the artist, will produce a piece of art, sculpture, painting etc which can be kept on display indefinitely at the school to inspire and motivate others. The theme this year is emotional well-being and we are all looking forward to seeing the results.

Premises Check List

At last the check list has been finalized and is in the process of being released throughout the Authority. We made copies available via the DAGB Reps network to those who had e-mail facilities and there was little doubt but what electronic communication and distribution was the best option. The document itself stretches to 20 pages and encompasses 121 separate elements. Granted, individual schools may well find that the actual number of those elements which relate directly to them may be only between a quarter and a third of that figure and some of the elements do not impact on educational premises. Nevertheless what DAGB has achieved, with the invaluable help of Paul Bickerdike, Mike Morton and their colleagues, now enables Governing Bodies to plan far more effectively than was possible hitherto.

Meetings with MPs

Elsewhere within this Newsletter are given details of the forthcoming meetings with Chris Kelly MP and with Pat McFadden MP. These two meetings will complete, within a twelve month time frame, the opportunity for members to meet with all of the local MPs. Where we have any issues with national legislation such meetings are critical if we are to convey our feelings and concerns back to central government. It is equally important for the five MPs themselves. The boundary changes implemented in 2010 have meant that whereas there had previously been four MPs this figure rose to five – unfortunately, for good or ill, this will all change yet again with the further boundary changes that have been proposed with the reduction in the number of Members of Parliament to coincide with the next General Election.

In conclusion I would like to thank all those members who have supported our activities and who continue to do so as we move into the brave new world of (Education Act 2011) Britain.

Brian Patterson
Chair, DAGB