

.....and What Happened Next?

In the previous edition of the Newsletter we advised our members of what actions had been undertaken and promised to keep governors appraised of progress and of new activities.

Single Status and Equal Pay

As yet we are not aware of any final figure for the settlement of this issue, and the latest statement from the powers-that-be is that it is expected at some time during the new financial year. Unfortunately for all concerned this is a most frustrating position and we feel that there is very little we can do at this time. It might be some little consolation to be told (and we do know this to be true) that there are a number of other Authorities in just the same position, amongst them our large next-door neighbour Birmingham.

The Association is committed to supporting any way of achieving the fairest solution to a very difficult problem. Watch this space but don't hold your breath for a quick answer.

SATs Marking

The publication of the Sutherland Inquiry identified numerous failings with the marking of the summer 2008 SATs tests and our complaints formed part of the evidence on which that report was based. It gave us the opportunity to complain again, this time to support two schools whose English scripts (at KS2) had been lost by QCA themselves and, in consequence, no results were awarded. Our letter to the Secretary of State on this matter elicited an apology but, we were told, no results could be produced on the basis of Teacher Assessment (as we had suggested) since those related to performance over a period of time whereas the tests reflected a one-off assessment – the irony of that might well have been cause for further comment !! We will be keeping a close eye on the tests this coming Summer and would invite any member school experiencing further problems to contact us as a matter of urgency so that we can make immediate contact with the Secretary of State again, and other appropriate people and departments to support our schools. Whilst individuals may well (and should) lodge their own complaints it is of value to have a corporate expression of concern as well.

League Tables and SATs

At the DAGB Representatives briefing meeting in January members expressed concerns about the whole ethos of SATs and League Tables. We have approached all the teaching unions to get their views on these issues and intend to consult directly with all members early in the Summer term to obtain their views. Then we will ensure that those views are brought to the attention of all our local Members of Parliament together with any other members of Parliament whom we may be able to influence. We will also press for other governor associations elsewhere to undertake a similar process so as to maximise the impact.

Corporate Property

What had been known as Dudley Property Consultancy (DPC) has now become Corporate Property within the Authority – its remit encompasses everything that the “old DPC” dealt with as well as an enlarged role. We have met with them again and continued to discuss the problems experienced by schools in the past. They are proving very receptive to our views and are taking on board some of the suggestions made.

It has been suggested that getting effective use from Corporate Property would justify the provision of appropriate training within the governor training schedule, possibly in the Autumn.

Ofsted

We had a good Area meeting on March 11th which is reported in detail elsewhere in this Newsletter. The attendance was the highest for many years showing that the topic was one which was perceived as being important by local governors. Of course, we would always like to see more attending but recognise the pressures under which so many governors have to operate. It is significant that the National Governors' Association (NGA) have Christine Gilbert (the Head of Ofsted and Senior Inspector of Schools) as their guest speaker at their Annual General Meeting next Autumn so our designation of Ofsted and the whole regime of inspection as being of critical importance is clearly shared elsewhere within governance.

Traded Services

Concerns from some governors have been brought to our attention about the extent to which the new Traded Services costs have increased this year. As this issue has only been raised quite recently we have not yet completed the data analysis. However it is our intention to complete that analysis and take appropriate action if we find that there have been any excessive increases. Again, watch this space!

Academies

As most, if not all, governors will by now be aware, the Authority have dropped their plans for introducing academies into Dudley. Whilst the concept may still be of *general* interest the priorities have now changed and we will therefore continue to focus on matters of more pressing concern locally. Nevertheless, research which had been done on this topic will be retained lest the situation re-emerge later.

DAGB Representatives Briefings

In October 2008 and again in January 2009 we held meetings to explain to our representatives in local schools what the Association was doing and, vitally importantly, to hear from them what they wanted the Association to do. There will be another Briefing session at Castle High School on Tuesday April 28th starting at 7.30pm and we hope that as many as possible will attend – this way we can be certain of your views and will be able to action them. Do please therefore make every effort to attend or to be represented.

Brian Patterson
Chair, DAGB