

## Association News – Summer 2014

### UIFSM

By the time this Newsletter reaches its readers we shall have had the chance to see for ourselves some of the effects of the Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) system. Certainly we will be aware of the practicalities surrounding its implementation; hopefully we might also be seeing some of the benefits in terms of behaviour and concentration but possibly that may not be too evident as yet.

The Association can take some credit in respect of the issues it raised with the Minister of State, David Laws, which have led to clarifications of the system (but which were anything but clear when first announced, nearly a year ago).

There remains one element of uncertainty, that as to whether the system will be extended to cover all or part of the Year 3 to Year 6 cohorts. This was referenced early on and the facility for doing so does exist in the statute books but there is currently no date for its implementation. It may well be that the Government wants to wait and see the effects of the current system and, indeed, the subsequent take-up of paid-for school meals in Year 3 and above before making any decision.

### Primary School Sports Premium

This has been in place for twelve months now and it is time to evaluate the system, to look at examples of good practice and to try to improve its implementation for the new, and subsequent, school years. We have agreed to host a conference to address these issues on Thursday October 23<sup>rd</sup> in conjunction with the Black Country Consortium – there will be two sessions, one in the afternoon and one in the evening and invitations will go out to Head Teachers, to Governors and to Sports Staff. It will be an opportunity to learn what is being done elsewhere and there is but little doubt that those attending will gain for their schools in the process. Please put this date into your diaries straight away.

### “Healthy Lifestyle” Competition

We were delighted with the support received for this year’s competition – its Fifth year of operation – and the turn-out at the celebratory prize-giving evening at Saltwells in June marked the climax for 2013 – 2014. Parents, School staff and children were all present and twenty-two individual prizes awarded as well as Shields being awarded to the two winning schools, The Brier Special (in the Primary category) and Redhill Secondary. The theme had been cyber-safety and the six winning entries (three primary and three secondary) were being converted into posters and distributed throughout the Borough. In addition during the evening, guests were entertained to a performance given by Loudmouth Theatre Company on the subject of cyber-safety.

### Bladed-Instrument Crime

We are assured by James Morris MP for Halesowen and Rowley Regis that our complaints made to him and to others at Westminster have led to a tightening up in the law as it relates to those found guilty of carrying a knife (or other bladed instrument) in public. This followed on from the murder of Christine Edkins, a Leasowes student, just over a year ago. This may be an element of increased

safety for others in the future. We do however believe that more tightening up remains to be done in respect of both this and of the premature release of patients suffering from mental illness and we are maintaining contact with James Morris on both issues.

### “SNOW” Campaign – Brierley Hill

We are pleased to learn that our objections to the siting of an anabolic congener in Brierley Hill – as well as those of others – has resulted in a refusal to grant permission for this. Had this been allowed there would not only have been an issue of air pollution but there would have been a considerable increase in the number of lorries carrying waste past a number of local schools.

### National Governors’ Association (NGA)

The NGA has recently published A Guide to Good Practice in the running of local associations – it is very gratifying indeed for us to find that we get two separate mentions in this out of the eleven that are quoted. Given that there are something like 70 or 80 Local Associations in the country this is no mean achievement.

### Michael Gove MP

In a government reshuffle Michael Gove has been replaced as Secretary of State for Education by Mrs Nicky Morgan, who also retains her role as Minister for Women and Equalities. She is Conservative MP for Loughborough and was a lawyer before becoming an MP. It is far too early to make any judgement about the new incumbent in this role although it seems unlikely that she will introduce any radical changes so close to a general election.

There has seldom been a Minister for Education who has made such an impact as has Michael Gove but, to be fair to him, he may or may not have been good at his job but he has undeniably believed passionately in what he was doing. Only time will tell whether his actions really were the right ones to take although the majority of educationalists have few or no doubts.

Finally as we come to the end of one academic year I would like to take the opportunity of thanking all those who have supported us during the course of the past twelvemonth, the DAGB representatives on various governing bodies, members of the Executive committee, our local Members of Parliament and Council members alike. We are all working to the same end – the well-being of children in this Borough and to Education in its widest sense.

*Brian A S Patterson*

*Chair, DAGB*