



Go-Governance - a newsletter for Governors and Clerks

Issue 4 - February 2017

Introduction

I hope all our Clerks and Governors have had a refreshing break and are ready to start another term. Please find in this edition the latest articles and prompts that as always, I hope you will find helpful.

Foundation Governor Recruitment Process

As included in the last edition of *Go-Governance*, the Department for Education (DfE) has issued new statutory guidance called 'The constitution of governing bodies of maintained schools'. This guidance particularly emphasises the importance of recruiting new governors based on skills needed by the FGB and requires new candidates to have a formal meeting with members of the FGB before any appointment is made. I have therefore recently been asking Chairs of Governors to arrange for such meetings to take place when recruiting new possible Foundation Governors.

To assist governors with this task we have produced a 'FOUNDATION GOVERNOR/DIRECTOR NOMINEE MEETING RECORD' form <http://schools.cliftondiocese.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/FG-Nominee-meeting-record-2-Feb-17.pdf> that is based on skills listed in the DfE guidance document and includes suggested possible questions and guidance that we hope will be helpful to you. If, after using it you would like to provide feedback on how useful, (or not) it may have been it would be much appreciated.

New Publications

As you may be aware the Department for Education has recently issued two new publications for all school governors. There is a new governance handbook

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/582868/Governance_Handbook - January 2017.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/582868/Governance_Handbook_-_January_2017.pdf) that replaces the previous November 2015 edition.

They have also produced a new document called 'A Competency Framework for Governance'

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/583733/Competency_framework_for_governance_.pdf that details "The knowledge, skills and behaviours needed for effective governance in maintained schools, academies and multi-academy trusts."

Shan Scott, the Chief School's Adjudicator has also produced her annual report on school admission arrangements <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/annual-report-of-the-chief-schools-adjudicator-for-england--2> which highlights the importance of schools complying with the requirements of the School Admissions Code.

Determined Admission Arrangements 2018-19

Please may I remind everyone that legislation requires that **all** schools must have determined their admission arrangements for the 2018-19 school year by the **28 February 2017** at the very latest.

The School Admission Code specifies that once determined, schools must publish a copy of the determined arrangements on their website displaying them for the whole offer year (the school year in which offers for places are made) and must send a copy of them to their local authority and to the Diocese.

Paragraph 1.47 of the Code <http://schools.cliftondiocese.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/School-Admissions-Code-2014.pdf> also specifies that you must notify the governing bodies of **all** other schools within the Relevant Area (RA) (unless you have arranged with your LA for it to do this for you). The RA is usually at least the size of the whole of the LA, and in some cases is bigger than it. If you're not sure what your RA is please contact your LA for details.

Where you determined a Published Admission Number that is higher than in previous years, the Code requires you to notify the local authority that you have done so, and make specific reference to the change on your website.

I'm afraid all schools must comply with these requirements of the Code by 15 March at the latest, whether you formally consulted on your 2018-19 arrangements or whether you decided not to make any changes to your arrangements from last year.

Complying with the Code will help to avoid problems at appeal hearings, being referred to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator or other legal challenges.

Appeals Time-Table 2017-18

If you've not already done so, please ensure that in accordance with page 10 of the DfE School Admissions Appeals Code <http://schools.cliftondiocese.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/School-Admission-Appeals-Code-2012.pdf> you publish a time-table for any appeals to be heard for new intake and in-Year admissions for 2017-18 on your school website. It is a legal requirement that it is published on your website by 28 February each year.

DfE Guidance on Budget Provision on School Appeals

The Catholic Education Service has informed us that there have been concerns that some Local Authorities (LAs) are attempting to remove services from Voluntary Aided (VA) Schools whilst retaining them for other types of maintained schools or that they are charging VA schools for them but not charging other maintained schools.

A particular concern is for the provision of admission appeals services. The School Admission Appeals Code requires LAs to allocate reasonable funds to own admission authority schools for admission appeals and that they are not allowed to discriminate between schools in the formula or in the way they use centrally retained funding. LAs therefore, should be either providing an appeals service free of charge or providing an evident uplift in budget to own admission authority schools. Please see the DfE guidance 'Schemes for Financing Schools' <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schemes-for-financing-schools> You may wish to check with your LA what provision has been made within your budget for admission appeals. Please let me know if you're concerned about your LA response.

Clerk to Governors Email Support Groups

Being a Clerk to Governors must often feel a rather isolated role, particularly for those new to the post, as there is no one else at the school performing the same or even a similar role. I'm sure all Clerks would find it useful to be in contact with fellow Clerks to discuss relevant issues and to share good practice and help to avoid the duplication of work. Solutions to problems are often already available but it's just knowing who to contact.

If you think you would benefit from being in contact with your fellow Clerks, why not form a 'Clerks Email Support Group'? You just need to send an email to your fellow Clerks asking if they would like to join you in a group. Once you've put the email addresses of those who respond positively into an Outlook Contact group - you're started! It only needs a few of you to create a really effective group. Perhaps start by inviting the Clerks from the schools in your Partnership Groups? Secondary Schools and Academies may like to form email groups to deal with their specific issues. Why not give it try!

Vacancy for Clerk to Governors

The governors of Wardour Catholic Primary School in Tisbury, near Salisbury are in need of a Clerk. If you know of anyone who might be interested in the role or if you would like to take on the role in addition to your existing post, please contact the School on 01747 870537, they would love to hear from you.

Email Security

Please may I remind all clerks and chairs of governors that we strongly recommend that personal email addresses are not used for school governance matters, Emails to personal or work email addresses may inadvertently be seen by other family members or colleagues and could be in breach of data protection.

If there is an investigation into a governor matter or freedom of information request, it may require the whole email account to be examined.

If you've not already done so, please ask your school to provide you with a standard format email address that is something like 'Clerk@st.marys.sch.uk' This also helps to provide continuity when a Clerk or Chair leaves the post.

As some of you will already be aware, when emailing copies of nomination forms and certificates of appointments to Chairs & Clerks, to maintain confidentiality of personal information, I am encrypting each document with a security password. In order to open the document you just need to give me a quick call to obtain the password. Please would you also use security measures when emailing personal or confidential information.

Governor Support Providers

I'm sure that many of our governing bodies are already purchasing support packages that are available from private providers to assist you in your role. Please see below the website links for 3 providers that may be of interest to you that schools may like to consider using if they are not already doing so.

1 - The Key <https://schoolgovernors.thekeysupport.com/the-governing-body/constitution-and-membership/eligibility-removal-disqualification/can-parents-be-governors-in-a-category-other-than-parent-governor/>

2 - National Governors Association (NGA) <http://www.nga.org.uk/Home.aspx>

3 - Modern Governor <https://www.moderngovernor.com/>

I must stress I'm not recommending that schools buy these services but thought they would be worth sharing with you for your consideration.

Of course I should also mention that the Catholic Education Service (CES) <http://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/> and our own Clifton Diocese Schools and Colleges <http://www.cliftondiocese.com/departments/schools-colleges/> websites also provide valuable resources for schools at no charge.

Next Issue

As always I hope you have found this edition helpful and if there are any items or topics that you would like to see included in the next edition please just let me know.

Best wishes

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