

## Welcome ...

..to the second edition of The Hartlepool Governor. This term we provide some useful guidance and links around improving governance, school attendance and budget preparation as well as information on the Chairs and Vice-Chairs Forum and forthcoming training. Want to know what a PAN is or a TLR? Then read on!



## Improving Governance – Ofsted

In December 2016 Ofsted published a report entitled 'Improving Governance' which followed a survey commissioned by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) to investigate the challenges facing governing bodies in schools. The report draws on evidence from visits to 24 recently improved schools in some of the poorest areas of the country. Each school had been found to be good or outstanding at their most recent inspection.

The survey highlighted common failings of many of the schools during the previous inspection including governors:

- not having enough focus on raising standards and school improvement
- not making effective use of information about pupils' performance
- being unable to account for the impact of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils.

The report identifies three critical factors in addressing weaknesses in governance. Firstly, that governing bodies actually become aware of their weaknesses. Governing bodies should undertake regular self-evaluation, if possible utilising external expertise. Secondly, they should develop professional knowledge, understanding and insight within the governing body. In some cases this may mean changing the composition of the board, in others it could involve accessing external expertise.

The third critical factor is to establish clarity about governors' roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability. Particular issues were highlighted in the survey in relation to multi-academy trusts which could be addressed by having clear and regularly reviewed schemes of delegation. The full report can be accessed using the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-governance>

## Budget Preparation

Schools and some academies will shortly be turning their attention to setting their budgets for the 2017-18 financial year. Maintained schools will receive their budget packs from the local authority in February including their individual school's budget (ISB). Schools have a statutory requirement to set a balanced budget which should be agreed by the board, governing body or a delegated committee and submitted to the local authority by 31<sup>st</sup> May.

As well as planning the budget for next year, schools working with their LA Finance Officer, will produce a three year budget forecast to help with forward planning. They are also required to complete a document called a Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) This is a self-assessment tool which helps schools to manage their finances and to provide assurance to the local authority that they have secure financial management in place. Ask your Headteacher about these.

When considering budget proposals governors should seek assurances that resources are allocated in line with the School Development Plan (SDP) priorities, that the school's assets are being effectively and efficiently used and that expenditure represents value for money.



## Chairs and Vice Chairs Forum

The Hartlepool Chairs and Vice Chairs Forum has been running since March 2015. The Forum provides the opportunity for chairs and vice chairs to come together once a term for an informal gathering where they can share their knowledge and experience and receive updates on key issues relating to their role as lead governors.

The meetings are informal and there are no minutes, with governors taking the lead on setting agendas. Recent presentation and discussion topics have included 'Improving the Effectiveness of Governance', 'Statutory Assessments' and 'Preparing for Ofsted'.

Meetings last no more than 90 minutes and can be more interesting than watching 'Pools'. The next meeting is scheduled for 6.30 pm on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February at the Centre of Excellence for Teaching and Learning (CETL). The meeting will include a presentation on the Governor Mark which is the quality standard for school governing bodies.

## Upcoming Training 2016-17

We were delighted to see so many new governors at the Induction training in November and we are considering putting on an additional session for those who could not make it. Please let us know if you would like to attend.

The Autumn termly Briefing and the Safeguarding Awareness sessions were also well attended and we received some good feedback from these. Dates for the Spring and Summer Briefings are given below and we would welcome ideas for topics for these sessions.

### Spring Term

Governor Briefing	20 <sup>th</sup> February 2017 at 6.00pm
Governor Briefing	23 <sup>rd</sup> February 2017 at 9.30am
Governor Briefing	23 <sup>rd</sup> February 2017 at 3.30pm

### Summer Term

Governor Briefing	15 <sup>th</sup> May 2017 at 6.00pm
Governor Briefing	17 <sup>th</sup> May 2017 at 9.30am
Governor Briefing	17 <sup>th</sup> May 2017 at 3.30pm
Induction Follow On	26 <sup>th</sup> June 2017 at 6.00pm
Induction Follow On	30 <sup>th</sup> June 2017 at 9.30am

Full details of the training can be found at:

<https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/governorsupportservice>

To book a place please contact the Governor Support Team or email [governor.support@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:governor.support@hartlepool.gov.uk)

## Appointing New Governors

Governors are reminded of recent government guidance which requires new governors to be interviewed before they are appointed by the governing body or board. This reflects the greater expectations placed on governors and seeks to ensure that prospective governors fully understand the role and have the skills necessary to support the school. As part of the interview process heads/chairs are expected to obtain character references for the candidates. This requirement to interview does not apply to Elected Parent or Staff Governors but it is strongly recommended that discussions are held with applicants before they submit their nominations. Further guidance on appointing governors will be provided at the next Governor Briefing.

## Safeguarding

A huge thank you to those governors who attended the safeguarding awareness sessions last term and contributed to the development of the safeguarding checklist for governors. This is a very useful document that will help governors to ask appropriate questions around safeguarding in their school. A link to this document can be found below.

[https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/info/20014/schools\\_and\\_learning/589/hartlepool\\_governor\\_support\\_service](https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/info/20014/schools_and_learning/589/hartlepool_governor_support_service)

## School Attendance Guidance

The Department for Education (DfE) has recently issued new guidance to help maintain high levels of school attendance. The guidance recognises the importance of regular attendance and punctuality on attainment levels and behaviour. It sets out the government's expectations of schools, local authorities, parents and pupils to:

- promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- act early to address patterns of absence
- parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.
- all pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

The guidance provides practical information around the requirements and content of the school Admissions and Attendance Registers, the recording of absence and advice around the setting of the school day and school year. The guidance can be accessed using the following link:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/564599/school\\_attendance.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/564599/school_attendance.pdf)

## In Brief

### Website

Schools need to ensure that their website is up to date with all statutory information including governor details. Schools should also ensure that they upload the required governor information to Edubase. These are things that Ofsted are likely to check as part of their inspection.

### So what is a PAN?

A common complaint at governing body meetings is around the use of acronyms. Whilst use of acronyms should be kept to a minimum, particularly around new governors it is easy to slip a few into conversations. We have therefore put together a list of acronyms which are in common use in education. This can be accessed from the Governor Support Section of the Hartlepool Borough Council website.

[https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/info/20014/schools\\_and\\_learning/589/hartlepool\\_governor\\_support\\_service/5](https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/info/20014/schools_and_learning/589/hartlepool_governor_support_service/5)

### Governor Handbook and Competency Framework

The updated Governance Handbook (January 2017) has now been issued by the DfE - see following link. [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)

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