

**REDCAR AND CLEVELAND LOCAL GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION**  
**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD AT 6.30 P.M. ON THURSDAY 2 JULY 2015**

**GOVERNORS PRESENT:**

Mr D. Brede, Caedmon Primary School  
 Mrs A. Blacklock, Nunthorpe Academy  
 Mrs P. Taylor, Outwood Bydales Academy  
 Mr D. Gallagher, Redcar Academy  
 Mrs Y. Joy, New Marske Primary School  
 Mr B. Coulston, Sacred Heart RC School  
 Mr C. Marley, Riverdale Primary School  
 Mrs R. Nicholls, Saltburn Learning Campus  
 Mrs A. Clayton, Westgarth Primary School  
 Mr J. Horkan, St Gabriel's Catholic Primary Academy  
 Mr N. Thirkell, Galley Hill Primary School

**ALSO PRESENT**

Glennis Smith, Redcar and Cleveland School Governor Support Service (Minutes)  
 Mrs Julia Millard, National Leader of Governance Advocate for the North East  
 Mrs Eleanor Nicholls, Chair of St Bede's Primary Catholic Academy and National Leader of Governance.

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of the following governors:

- Mr M. Bloomfield, Belmont Primary School
- Mrs D. Falconer, Wheatlands Primary School
- Mrs S. Nicholson, Riverdale Primary School
- Mr J. Tombs, Lockwood Primary School
- Mrs M. Woods, St Margaret Clitherow's Catholic Primary Voluntary Academy
- Mrs J. Mackin, St Margaret Clitherow's Catholic Primary Voluntary Academy
- Mr D. Atkin, Nunthorpe Primary Academy

2. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2015 be approved and signed by the Chair.

Clerk /  
Chair

3. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

3.1 **Presentation from John Barnard on CAHMS / CYPS (Arising from Item 1)**

Mrs Smith had emailed Mr Barnard's PowerPoint presentation to all Local Governors' Association representatives on 1 April 2015, along with a copy of Rosemary Nicholls' report on this meeting. The Chair recommended that governors read the circulated information as the meeting had been very interesting.

### 3.2 Treasurer (Arising from Item 6)

Mrs Smith understood that the former Treasurer had not yet arranged a hand-over meeting with the new Treasurer because all of the financial records were currently with the auditor. It was not known whether the new Treasurer had arranged for her name to be included on the bank mandate.

### 3.3 Annual Subscription (Arising from Item 9)

The Chair confirmed that the local authority was required to charge VAT for the clerking support it provided to the Association. This meant that the Executive Committee was likely to recommend an increase in the subscription of approximately £10 per year.

## 4. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

### 4.1 School Improvement Advisers (Arising from Item 4.1)

Mrs Smith reported that David Baldwin had taken up post as a School Improvement Adviser. Sarah Richardson would leave the LA at the end of July and a new School Improvement Adviser, Lynn Stabler, would take up post in September. Mrs Smith emphasised how well the advisers were working with governors and the School Governor Support Service and how keen they were to be involved in delivering governor training.

### 4.2 Role of the Executive Committee

The Chair clarified for new representatives that one of the Executive Committee's main tasks was to plan the Local Governors' Association meetings. Governors were encouraged to pass any suggestions for meeting topics to Glennis Smith. The next meeting of the Executive Committee was scheduled for Monday 13 July 2015 at 6.30 p.m.

## 5. UPDATE ON ARRANGEMENTS FOR AUDITING THE ACCOUNTS

Mrs Smith explained the circumstances leading to a delay in the auditing of the accounts. In order to complete the process the auditor required outstanding bank statements. The Chair passed to Mrs Smith statements he had received to date so that she could copy relevant ones and pass them to the auditor. It was noted that there had been difficulties with signatories on the bank mandate and signing of cheques. Bank statements were now being sent to the Chair. Mrs Smith would check whether the former Treasurer or the Vice-Chair had any bank statements that the auditor required. The accounts for the 2013/14 and 2014/15 financial years would be presented at the AGM in the Autumn term. The Chair confirmed that the balance of the account was currently healthy.

Mrs Smith

## 6. INFORMATION FROM THE NATIONAL GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

6.1 It was acknowledged that most governors now had access to NGA information through the weekly email and the NGA magazine. The latest issue of the magazine included a useful article on recruiting a new head teacher. There was also an article about data and the Fisher Family Trust

(FFT) Data Dashboard. It was noted that, unlike the Ofsted Data Dashboard, which was publicly available, schools needed to subscribe to FFT to access their Data Dashboard and governors could be given login details. A governor reported that her school used the FFT Aspire system, which was very useful. There was also a piece in the magazine about multi academy trusts, which provided a good template for judging effectiveness.

- 6.2 Rosemary Nicholls, governor at Saltburn Learning Campus, reported on a breakfast event advertised through the NGA bulletin, which she had attended that morning. It had been hosted by national organisation "Let's Do Business". A cooked breakfast had been provided and there had been an opportunity for discussion with employers and school staff. A series of presentations had been delivered about schools having a "careers ready" approach. Speakers had included regional experts and students. The event had been mainly aimed at secondary schools.
- 6.3 Yvonne Joy, Chair of Governors at New Marske Primary School, reported on a careers week held in her school where a range of employees had come in to talk to the children about their roles. The children had enjoyed the experience, which had sown seeds for them to begin thinking about what they might want to do in future. It opened their minds to the options and reinforced the importance of their education, as well as preparing them for moving on to secondary school. The initiative had been very successful and would take place annually. Rosemary Nicholls expressed an interest in attending similar events in future.
- 6.4 Alison Blacklock, staff director at Nunthorpe Academy, reported that she worked with many businesses through STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) and they placed a great deal of emphasis on involvement with primary schools and parental engagement. She was organising an event for November involving local engineering companies, which would be targeted at Y6, Y7 and Y8. Mrs Blacklock would let Rosemary Nicholls have the details so that she could attend. It was noted that Trust4Learning had had some successful careers-related initiatives.
- 6.5 Brief discussion took place regarding proposed changes to transition arrangements for 2016 so that Y7 pupils would spend three weeks in their secondary school at the end of the summer term. John Anthony, Head of Learning and Achievement at the Local Authority was encouraging this, but not all secondary schools had been able to introduce it this year. Freebrough Academy already had a three week transition period.

Mrs  
Blacklock

## 7. CHAIR'S CORRESPONDENCE / REPORT

The Chair reported that Sacred Heart RC School and St Benedict's RC Primary School had still not converted to academies as part of the Nicholas Postgate Academy Trust.

## 8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no further items discussed in the business meeting.

9. JULIA MILLARD, NATIONAL LEADER OF GOVERNANCE (NLG) ADVOCATE

- 9.1 The Chair introduced Julia Millard (NLG Advocate) and Eleanor Nicholls (Chair of Governors at St Bede's Primary Catholic Academy and NLG).
- 9.2 Julia explained that NLGS were experienced chairs of governors, selected, trained and designated by the National College for Teaching and Leadership, which was now part of the DfE and had the remit for school to school support. The National College also managed the designation of National Leaders of Education (NLEs), Specialist Leaders in Education (SLEs) and Local Leaders of Education (LLEs). NLGs provided support for other governing bodies.
- 9.3 NLGs had been in existence since 2011 and Julia had been included in the first cohort. There were now 380 NLGs in the country. A new cohort was being designated the following week, at which point there would be 21 NLGs in the North East from Northumberland to Redcar and Cleveland. Only two local authorities, Gateshead and Hartlepool, didn't have any NLGs. NLGs could work in any local authority area. The North East was one of smallest regions in terms of the number of NLGs, but also had the smallest population, so the ratio was fairly representative. However, more applications were encouraged. Most NLGs were working well in schools.
- 9.4 Julia's role as NLG Advocate included trying to raise the level of deployment, talking to governors about the role and supporting the NLGs. She facilitated a strong network for NLGs and spoke to organisations such as local authorities, dioceses and teaching school alliances. There was a good system in place, which was maturing.
- 9.5 DfE information about the role of the NLG could be found on the .gov.uk web site. The Clerk would send a link to representatives. The role might change following review but currently involved developing leadership capacity by supporting mainly chairs of governors. Support might be required where a school was in or at risk of being in an Ofsted category, where a governing body was going through the process of academy conversion, where there was a new chair or where working practices of leadership needed improvement. NLGs could also work with schools where leadership and management was good but where governors wanted to know how they could improve further.
- 9.6 The NLG would initially contact the person who had requested the support. The process mainly involved one to one conversations and listening, but might include attending a governing body meeting, facilitating a self-review or assisting with drawing up and / or monitoring an action plan.
- 9.7 Eleanor reported that she had been involved with one governing body following a review of governance, to provide an independent view during the process of working through the action plan. This had developed to focus on succession planning. Eleanor emphasised that the role didn't involve telling governing bodies and chairs what to and she didn't claim to be an expert, but she was able to bring an objective view and help to explores answers through discussion. She had also been asked to conduct

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an investigation into a governing body because of a complaint that had arisen. Eleanor emphasised that she had also learned from her involvement with other schools.

- 9.8 It was clarified that the NLG role was voluntary. However, the NLG Advocate position was a paid role. Julia had deployments as an NLG in addition to her Advocate role and also served on an Interim Executive Board (IEB) as well as her own governing body. The system was flexible and NLGs decided on their own capacity to take on work. The context was crucial and NLGs were deployed based on who had the relevant experience. Their role was to support, not to inspect, judge or criticise. They might challenge but would be respectful and listen and needed to be sensitive to the context of school. The aim was to empower governors to be the best they could be. If an NLG didn't know the answer they would find an NLG who could help and could contact each other for suggestions via an email network.
- 9.9 Julia emphasised that seeking support from an NLG was a strength not a weakness. Schools that asked for support became strong schools that could then support others. She gave examples of some of her deployments and the impact, including:
- Supporting a governing body to understand data and use it to hold school leaders to account.
  - Coaching on how to challenge senior leaders.
  - Helping a Chair prepare for their first meeting.
  - Assisting a governing body with a self-review and production of a written action plan.
  - Supporting with a relationship issue between a Chair and Head Teacher.
  - Supporting a special school that had been given a pre-warning notice.
- 9.10 In summary, NLGs could help to improve standards, coach chairs to challenge appropriately, improve governing body processes, develop effectiveness and confidence, observe governing body meetings and signpost governors to other support and training already available. Julia emphasised that she worked closely with local authorities, multi-academy trusts and dioceses to add capacity to systems already in place. Delivery of training was not part of the NLG's remit.
- 9.11 A governor reported on the recent Ofsted inspection of his school. Inspectors had commented that governors didn't go into classrooms and witness lessons. Discussion took place regarding the role of the link governor and the purpose of visiting classes, which was not to make judgements on the quality of teaching. Julia gave examples of circumstances when visiting a classroom might be appropriate, such as following up a discussion with a maths subject leader by offering to see something in practice in the classroom or accompanying a senior leader to see how the performance management process was working. The teacher needed to understand the purpose of the visit. However, Julia also felt that Ofsted inspectors sometimes asked questions to test whether governors understood their role, so the inspector in this case may actually not be

suggesting that governors should visit classrooms.

- 9.12 A Chair of Governors reported that her governing body had decided to link governors to priorities in the School Improvement Plan. For example, two governors were linked to Quality of Teaching and Learning. They visited school three times a year, including going into a classroom in order to have the opportunity to see a good lesson in practice. They had been involved in a review meeting with the School Improvement Adviser, which had been very useful, and had the opportunity to look at books and marking.
- 9.13 Discussion took place regarding the challenge for busy governors to be involved in school during the day. It was suggested that expectations should be set during the governor recruitment process. Eleanor reported that, when recruiting two parent governors recently, her governing body had been very specific regarding the time commitment, expectations and skills required. The governors at her school visited school to talk to middle leaders and ask questions about progress and targets, rather than relying on the Head Teacher. This practice backed up what happened in the formal governing board meetings.
- 9.14 A governor gave details of the performance management process in his school. Staff who didn't meet all their objectives could make a case for a pay award to the governors. 42% hadn't requested a pay award. Another governor reported that his governing body spot sampled paperwork in relation to staff appraisal and pay recommendations.
- 9.15 Julia suggested asking the following questions to determine whether the support of an NLG would be beneficial:
- How long have I been chair or a governor?
  - Would I like someone to work alongside me for a year?
  - Is my school facing a particular challenge – e.g. attainment, academy conversion or a new building project?
  - Would I like someone to provide an external, impartial view and advise whether I am focussing on key tasks?
  - Do I want to find out more about effective governance?
- 9.16 Support could be accessed through the recently established North East NLG web-site at [www.nlgnortheast.co.uk](http://www.nlgnortheast.co.uk). The site was not completely finished but included information about NLGs and a contact form. Governors were advised that it was necessary to fill in every field or the request wouldn't be processed. They should indicate the type of support they required and whether it was urgent. The Clerk would send the web link to governors.
- 9.17 It was clarified that NLG support was free of charge. NLGs received a grant from the National College to cover their expenses. Any funding unspent could be used for their governing body.
- 9.18 In terms of the length of deployments, it was sometimes possible to give an indication when setting the parameters or it might not be possible to specify.

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- 9.19 Julia gave details of the selection process for NLGs, but indicated that this might be reviewed. An NLG had to be an experienced chair, having undertaken that role for a minimum of three years out of the last five. They should have good leadership skills and experience of coaching and mentoring. They should have already started to support a school led system and have a track record of leading school improvement. Their school's data must be above floor standards and show an improving trend. Their school had to be judged by Ofsted to be Good or Outstanding with at least Good for Leadership and Management.
- 9.20 Currently NLGs were expected to provide up to 10 days support in a year free of charge. This would be redefined as up to 6 hours per month. It was preferable for an NLG to support one school well rather than give reduced support to multiple schools. A one day induction training course was provided by the National College. New NLGs in the North East were mentored and Eleanor emphasised that this support was invaluable. She suggested that the best people to become NLGs were probably those who were approached by someone else who had confidence in their ability to undertake the role. It was important for NLGs to recognise that they didn't know everything and that becoming an NLG was a learning process. Network meetings were held once a term, attended by a representative from the National College. These allowed NLGs to share their experience, issues and needs.
- 9.21 Benefits of NLG support included being helped through a particular process, accelerated improvement, preparation for or recovery from Ofsted, increased self-awareness and an independent view of the school. Being part of a school-led system with support from the LA and Diocese as appropriate was the way forward and NLGs added capacity to existing governance services.
- 9.22 Governors were advised to use the web-site to request formal support, to ensure the appropriate person was allocated. However, they were welcome to address any general queries to Julia and Eleanor. The Chair thanked Julia and Eleanor for their contributions to the meeting.

As this was the last meeting for Glennis Smith from the School Governor Support Service, who was due to leave the local authority, the Chair thanked her for her support to the Local Governors' Association. The meeting closed at 8.30 p.m.