

Redcar and Cleveland Local Governors Association

Summer Term 2015 Meeting

Speaker: Julia Millard - National Leader of Governance Advocate for the North-East

"I'd like to tell you what a National Leader of Governance can do to help with school improvement," said Julia Millard at the summer term meeting of our Local Governors Association. With Eleanor Nicholls, Chair of Governors of St Bede's Primary Catholic Voluntary Academy Marske and designated NLG, Julia talked about the services on offer.

The scheme began nationally in 2011. Experienced Chairs of Governors have volunteered to be trained and designated by the National College for Teaching and Leadership to support school governing bodies who ask for their assistance. There are now three hundred and fifty in the country and twenty-one in the north east. Almost all local authorities now have an NLG.

"We are the smallest region, but the ratio of NLGs to schools is on a par with the coverage nationally," explained Julia. "My role as Advocate involves travelling the length and breadth of the region, from the Tees to the Scottish border, discussing strategic plans for school improvement with bodies such as local authorities, teaching alliances and dioceses. With individual governing bodies, I and the other NLGs work to build leadership capacity."

Key to achieving this is support for Chairs of Governors. NLGs make contact with the person requesting help and have a one to one conversation with him or her about current issues. Listening is the first step. They may attend governing body meetings and support self-review processes. "We may be able to offer a fresh pair of eyes," added Eleanor.

New Chairs can be mentored and good relationships between governors and staff can be developed. Support can be given to help the governing body work effectively as a team and training and development opportunities can be signposted. The NLGs are able to support governing bodies of schools which have been downgraded by OFSTED or whose test and exam results are below floor standards. They can support governors undertaking academy conversion and those who are struggling to resolve challenging complaints.

"All support is free of charge," said Julia. "NLGs are volunteers. After assistance, governing bodies will be asked to fill in a confidential evaluation form, which is sent to the National College for Teaching and Leadership."

The NLGs work alongside existing providers of governor support services, such as local authorities and dioceses. They can offer medium to long term support that compliments other service provision.

"It's important to remember that asking for help is a strength, not a failing," Julia said. "An outside impartial view can be such an asset in achieving school improvement."

Anyone interested in finding out more is welcome to look at the website: www.nlgnortheast.co.uk where a form can be filled in to request contact from an NLG. Julia will match the request with a volunteer who has relevant experience. The form can be marked 'Urgent' if this is the case.

Chairs of Governors who think they might like to apply to become NLGs should also access the website. There is a set of criteria to meet. Applicants should have been a Chair for three out of the last five years and have experience of supporting other schools. He or she should have a track record of leading school improvement and the data of the school needs to be above floor standards. The most recent OFSTED rating must be Good or Outstanding. There is a day of training at the National College and this is followed up by mentoring. There are network meetings once a term, to which a member of the National College is invited. A commitment of six hours a month is envisaged.

“The NLGs keep learning through deployment,” continued Julia. “They make connections with other schools and add capacity to other services.”

Julia can be contacted on millard_julia@yahoo.co.uk or through the National College on governors.mailbox@education.gsi.gov.uk

Rosemary Nicholls
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