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Newsletter for School Governors

Issue 4 - Autumn '10

What to watch on the web this term:

Brand new videos for governors this autumn on www.teachers.tv

Need to Know - Pay and Pensions
bit.ly/9rmubX

Need to Know - The Budget and School Funding
bit.ly/d6nyDx

Need to Know - Coalition Plans for Education
bit.ly/cJcfnl

Need to Know - Social Media
bit.ly/bZJdhg

For a round-up of new programmes out this term, watch the Autumn **show reel** here - bit.ly/cS3If1

Take the behaviour challenge!

As governors, you may often be at the sharp end of a budget proposal or a SIP but it's probably rare that you find yourself in a classroom, especially when things aren't going so well. Teachers TV has launched an online interactive behaviour tool, allowing the viewer to experience realistic classroom situations from a teacher's eye perspective. Three children, three strategies apiece, three possible outcomes for each.

Use it as a starting point for discussing your behaviour policy. Assess your school's behaviour management strategies against those demonstrated here. Or just get a taste of what life is like at the chalkface of education delivery.

Secondary Behaviour Challenge -
bit.ly/b8510u

Need to Know - New Powers to Discipline -
bit.ly/bYK1vc

The business of governance

Some companies offer paid time off for you to carry out your governance duties. Steve Acklam from the School Governors' One-Stop Shop (SGOSS) explains how volunteering as a school governor can benefit both the individual and the employer.

"The pace of change in education is so unrelenting that it is almost impossible not to gain new skills as a school governor. Changes to education will make the role more important than ever, with governors playing a hugely important part in the "Big Society".

Today's schools are highly autonomous, managing their own budgets and internal policies creating tangible opportunities for developing business skills. Both SGOSS and the City of London Corporation have produced reports that demonstrate this.

A 2007 SGOSS report, based on over 600 responses, found that the key impacts on personal development were financial management, senior staff appointments, developing empathy and listening, chairing meetings, growth of self confidence, and an enhanced understanding of education.

In the City of London Corporation's 2010 evaluation, the role emerges as the most challenging volunteering option and the one which delivers the most significant skills gains, notably in the enhancement of hard business expertise, such as planning budgets; and specific technical skills in areas such as HR and strategic planning. Further, employers benefitted from a more aware and motivated employee; positive PR; and a connection with the future workforce. The report concluded that developing core competencies through volunteering is less expensive than traditional training."

Recruiting a New Head - bit.ly/bNbNfd

Being Chair - bit.ly/cixYX8

School Governors One-Stop Shop - www.sgoss.org.uk



Governor spot: what's on your mind?

Julia Skinner, a chair of governors from Bristol, has her say...

"There are many changes afoot in the world of education, from the introduction of academies and free schools to the abolition of the SEF. The previous Government mentioned a review of governance that would both clarify the role and give it more status. Governing bodies are expected to take on not only strategic roles but responsibilities that if not handled well could lead to disputes, accusations and even lawsuits. Governance is a vital part of the framework of education and governors need the protection of good, solid training. Chairs of Governors should undergo statutory training, not only to inform but to protect them. Even volunteers deserve flak jackets!"

Download free training packs from www.teachers.tv/governors

Checklist: 5 ways to motivate new governors

Tom Hesmondhalgh is an LA appointed governor from Croydon. His blog, supergovernor.wordpress.com, shares information and advice to help you become “a supergovernor without the supereffort.”

Cast your mind back to your first governing body meeting. A lot of people you probably didn't know, throwing around strange acronyms like they were going out of fashion. You felt you had a lot to give, but just couldn't quite work out how!

It's a common issue for new governors, which is why it's vital that they're given the support to develop and the encouragement to get stuck in and make a difference. Here are five things you could be doing for your governors right now.

- 1 Set Up a Buddy System** New governors will have lots of questions, but may not ask them in open meetings for fear of embarrassing themselves. Give each new governor an experienced governor as a mentor. They can then go through all of the key documents asking as many questions as they like.
- 2 Get Them into School** Being a governor can seem like a dry old job unless you spend a good amount of time in school. It's only then that you see the impact of all those meetings, policies and programmes.
- 3 Give Them Early Responsibility** Give them a project. Everyone comes to the table with expertise in one area or another. Asking them to contribute will give them an early signal that you expect them to take responsibility and help shape the life of the school.
- 4 Develop a Training Plan** A new parent governor, for example, will need different training than a staff governor. It's a great opportunity to signpost particular courses or Teachers TV videos they would find useful. The sooner they feel confident in what's being discussed at meetings, they more engaged they'll be.
- 5 Don't Force Them to Specialise Too Early** One of the first things that often happens to new governors is they get asked to join various committees. Why restrict your options at this stage? Give them a chance to come to whichever ones they like for the first term, so they can really get an idea of where they'd like to focus.

Question time

Duncan Pickering from the School Governors' Digest agonises over your governance problems. Submit your problem to newsletter@teachers.tv.

“I'd appreciate some advice about handling complaints about a head. There's a three-way row between my head, the LA and a parent and I'm caught in the middle!”

Anon, LA Chair of Governors from South of England.

Without details, my advice concerns procedure. First, ensure that the parent has followed the school's complaints procedure, to the letter. Next, the Governors Complaints Committee should speak to the head regarding the matter and decide whether to respond to the parent in writing or to take this to a meeting.

Here, the head and parent are able to ask questions of each other, and the Committee members can question both parties. Both sides may be accompanied. The parent then retires and the panel makes their decision.

The losing party can appeal and this is then heard by the Governor's Appeals Panel, who hears the evidence for the first time. If they find the same way then this should be final. Any disciplinary actions must be carried out, and errors reversed.

Finally, if it is a competency issue then the LA might be trying to move the governors forward to take action on this. Seek advice from your Local Authority HR, Legal or Governor Services Department, or the National Governors Association.

Problems with Personnel - bit.ly/9yXd96

The Incompetent Teacher - bit.ly/9oyMlk



The Big Debate – Where to Spend? Where to Cut?

hosted by Krishnan Guru-Murthy, live and interactive

8pm, Thursday 21st October

www.teachers.tv/big-debate-live

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