



## Report to Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee 3 October 2013

**Report of:** Executive Director – Children, Young People and Families

**Subject:** School Governance – Vacancy Management, Recruitment and Training

**Author of Report:** Mike Patterson, School Liaison Manager, School Liaison Team

**Summary:**

The Government is highlighting the important role of school governance, saying that “when schools do poorly or badly it’s not just the issue of the school leader, the head and the school leadership team, it’s the way the governors have held the leadership to account...Our new arrangements will focus more on governance and the effectiveness of governance than ever before.” (Sir Michael Wilshaw HMC1). In 2012, the Government introduced changes to the regulations regarding school governance, including scope for governing bodies to reduce their membership to a minimum of seven (including two parent governors). In Sheffield, more and more schools are either looking to partnership arrangements that include shared governance with others and/or are making changes to their governance arrangements in response to a rapidly changing landscape for schools. The Council’s Governors Support Service is adapting the ways in which it works so that it can positively support schools to make appropriate and effective changes.

**Type of item:** The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	√
Other	

**The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:**

The Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the contents of the report.

**Background Papers:**

Statutory Guidance on the School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012

**Category of Report:** OPEN

# **Report of the Executive Director of Children, Young People and Families**

## **School Governance – Vacancy Management, Recruitment and Training**

### **1. Introduction/Context**

1.1 A report was presented to Scrutiny Committee in April 2012 in relation to school governance in Sheffield and this report – requested by the Chair – provides an update. In particular, this report informs Committee about how the Council's Governors Support Service supports schools to respond to vacancies and the recruitment of governors against a rapidly changing environment for schools. In so doing, the report informs Committee about what has been done in relation to their particular concerns highlighted in the April 2012 report. In April 2012 Scrutiny recommended that the Governors Support Service -

- Recruit more high-quality, strong governors for Local Authority governor and Additional Governor roles in targeted schools.
- Change its training and support for governors to increasingly focus on data to provide governors with the knowledge, skills and confidence to interpret data and offer appropriate challenge to their school.
- Increase governors' understanding of the range of improvement strategies which may be employed to address underperformance.
- Refocus its support to governing bodies to enable governors to find the most suitable and effective form of leadership and governance to meet their school's circumstances.

### **2. Main body of report, matters for consideration, etc.**

2.1 In advance of national initiatives, Sheffield launched its Data Report to Governors (DRG) in December 2012. In spring 2013 training was offered to two members of every governing body to support the understanding and interpretation of the report. A DRG reference group including four governors from primary and secondary sectors and two headteachers was established and meets each term to review the content and presentation of the DRG with local authority officers from the Data Team, School Improvement Service and Governors Support Service.

2.1.1 This work builds on previous guidance "Governors and Performance Data" issued in spring 2012 and a regular focus in the termly governors newsletter on data available to governors. Governors are regularly reminded through the termly newsletter how to access the DRG and other data on the Children's

Profile website and arrangements are in place to ensure that all governors have password access to their school's data.

- 2.1.2 The Data Team reports increasing demand from governors requesting to be issued with login passwords, which indicates increasing governor use and awareness of the site. 108 governing bodies sent at least one representative (184 governors in total) to the DRG training sessions in spring 2013.
- 2.2 The Governors Support Service maintains an 'additional governors' register including current experienced governors, ex-headteachers and local authority officers along with others who have indicated a willingness to be approached to serve as additional governors at schools causing concern.
  - 2.2.1 Additional governors are appointed at an early stage where there are concerns about governing body capacity and by negotiation with the governing body wherever possible. Additional governor appointments have been used to ensure effective chairing capacity where there are no current vacancies on the governing body but insufficient capacity within the existing membership.
  - 2.2.2 Additional governor appointments are also made to strengthen the capacity of governing bodies that have been carrying long-term vacancies. Feedback is positive and reports that governing bodies are now able to fulfil their functions more effectively.
- 2.3 Sheffield currently has one National Leader of Governance (NLG). Since appointment, this NLG in liaison with the local authority has conducted Governance Reviews in six schools and continues to work with most of these as they seek to make positive changes to their governance and leadership.
  - 2.3.1 The Governors Support Service has been pro-active in its promotion of the NLG programme through half termly e-bulletins with potential candidates encouraged to consider applying for NLG status. A new 'application window' for NLGs opened 13 September 2013 and the Service contacted twenty-one potential candidates from a range of Sheffield schools to encourage them to consider applying.
- 2.4 Sheffield's overall school governor vacancy rate is close to the national average, being 12.7% (June 2013) compared with the most recent national average of 12.3% (March 2012). In the academic year 2012/13, the Council supported the appointment of 465 new Governors to 145 schools across the city.
  - 2.4.1 Through the effective partnership that the Governors Support Service has with the 'School Governors' One Stop Shop' (a national charity established by the Department for Education (DfE) with a remit to recruit prospective governors) the Service is ensuring that vacancies are managed and recruited to collaboratively.

- 2.4.2 The Service has also started to undertake focussed 'governor recruitment' events with key city employers aimed at encouraging their employees to apply to become governors. In July 2013 the Service held an event with managers at the DfE to promote 'becoming a governor' with them, and is currently facilitating the placement of a number of governor applicants following the event.

### **3 What does this mean for the people of Sheffield?**

- 3.1 The quality of school governance has become something upon which both the Government and Ofsted are more sharply focussed than before. The role of governing bodies in supporting and challenging the performance of school leadership teams to improve learning and attainment for children and young people is now something that Ofsted review when inspections are made. It is therefore very important that the Council should do what it can to ensure that the city's schools have the best possible governing body arrangements in place.
- 3.2 The Governor Support Service intends to build upon the use of data and intelligence it receives from a variety of sources to continue to improve the support it provides to school governing bodies, specifically: deploying governors effectively; managing vacancies including potentially, reductions in governor numbers where appropriate; working more closely with key employers to encourage school governor applications, and; actively promoting and encouraging potentially eligible governors to apply to become NLGs.

### **4. Recommendation**

- 4.1 The Scrutiny Committee are asked note the content of the report and the work that the Governors Support Service is undertaking in order to support schools in making positive changes to their governance arrangements and the recruitment of quality school governors.

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