

NGA Newsletter 120609

The NGA Newsletter is an essential briefing document for any governor or governor support officer. The Newsletter gives details of new research, government consultation papers, policy announcements and legislation, together with a summary of recent education stories in the media.

Department for Children Schools and Families.

We reported last week that Ed Balls was staying put, but almost every other minister at the DCSF has changed. Jim Knight MP has been moved to the Department for Work and Pensions and has been replaced as Minister of State for Schools and Learners by Vernon Coaker MP (a former deputy headteacher). Dawn Primarolo becomes the new Minister of State for Children, Young People and Families and Kevin Brennan as Minister of State for Further Education, Skills, Apprenticeships and Consumer Affairs will serve two Departments, DCSF and BIS (see below).

Sarah McCarthy-Fry has been replaced by Diana Johnson MP as Parliamentary under Secretary of State for Schools and an additional junior minister, Ian Wright MP, has been given responsibility for 14-19 matters and apprenticeships. Baroness Delyth Morgan remains the junior minister for children, young people and families.

For more details on Ministerial Responsibilities see the DCSF website via the attached link [DCSF Ministerial Responsibilities](#).

Department for Business Innovation and Skills

The other education department, DIUS, (Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills) had one of the shortest life spans in government history and has been absorbed into the new Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS).

White Paper School Accountability – Ministerial Review on Governance

No sign yet of either document reaching publication, but the White Paper did get a mention in Ed Balls' speech to the National College for School Leadership's Annual Conference. In the speech he said the White Paper would give more control to schools in relation to school improvement budgets.

The speech is available to view on the NCSL's website and a transcript is promised - [NCSL Ed Balls' Speech](#)

Ofsted

Today announced their new framework for inspections taking place from September 2009 onwards. In announcing the new framework Christine Gilbert HMCI said that "We are introducing a tougher test on attainment" and indicated that although pupil progress would still take precedence more focus would be placed on raw attainment levels. The implication of these statements is that schools with lower attainment scores, even if they are in challenging areas with good pupil progress may find it difficult to achieve a good or outstanding Ofsted rating.

The other key points about the new inspection framework are that:

- the inspectors will spend more time undertaking classroom observation
- that inspectors will make specific recommendations for improvement - as opposed to simply saying that a school needs to improve
- Ofsted will gather and analyse the views of pupils and parents - possibly on an annual basis from next year
- Ofsted will look more closely at the way in which schools work in partnership with other providers

From September outstanding and good schools will receive a full inspection once every five years, unless an annual assessment of their performance suggests there are

reasons (e.g. performance, safeguarding issues, they are part of a random sample for benchmarking or they form part of a hard federation and it is sensible to inspect all the schools at one time) to inspect earlier.

Any school who Ofsted decide not to inspect within three years of its previous inspection will receive an interim assessment.

Inspections will remain short notice (and on occasion no notice). The latter will primarily be used where particular concerns have been raised. Monitoring visits for schools judged inadequate or satisfactory on their previous inspection will be no notice.

The new framework can be downloaded via the attached link - [Ofsted - New Framework](#)

The Lamb Inquiry into Special Educational Needs – Have your say

The Lamb Inquiry was set up by the DCSF last year to investigate ways of increasing parental confidence in the SEN system. The Inquiry is lead by Sir Brian Lamb (hence the name). There are several strands to the Inquiry, an expert group a stakeholder group (on which NGA is represented) and now the public call for evidence.

The Inquiry wants to hear from all those involved in the education of children with SEN, including governors. The Inquiry has developed a series of questionnaires for parents, students, school staff and for other professionals working with children. If you would like to respond governors should fill in the questionnaire for other professionals.

The questionnaires and information about the Lamb Inquiry can be downloaded [Lamb Inquiry](#).

Home Education

In January the DCSF announced a short review into home education led by Graham Badman. The responsibility for ensuring that a child is educated rests with the parents and there is no legal requirement for a child to attend school. Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 requires that:

“The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable –

(a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and

(b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.”

The review was set up as concerns had been expressed at the lack of oversight on safeguarding issues as well as quality of some home education. The report was published this week and contained 28 recommendations which have been accepted by the DCSF. The key recommendations of the review are:

- That the DCSF should establish a compulsory register containing the names of all children who are educated otherwise than at school. The register would be managed at local authority level.
- That on registration parents should supply a statement of what they intend to achieve in the next 12 months.
- All children on the register should receive an annual visit from the local authority.
- That DCSF should produce statutory guidance on what constitutes “suitable education”
- That new legislation should be introduced to give local authorities
- Responsibilities for monitoring the effectiveness of home education
- To produce a report of a monitoring visit which must be sent to the parent/carer with the opportunity for challenge/comment
- That local authorities have home access rights for monitoring purposes
- and have the right to speak to the child/young person alone or in the presence of another trusted individual who is not the parent/carer

- Perhaps most controversially the report recommends that the local authority should have the right to revoke the registration (i.e. remove the right to home educate) if there are safeguarding concerns or concerns about the ability to provide suitable education.

The full report can be downloaded via the attached link - [Home Education Report](#).

News reports on the review can be viewed

[Daily Mail](#) [The Times](#) [Guardian](#) [BBC Online](#)

Building Schools for the Future (BSF)

On Thursday the Parliamentary Public Accounts Select Committee published its report into BSF. In a highly critical report the Committee criticised the programme in a number of key areas:

- That the DCSF had never properly defined what it wanted success to look like and that it should set out measurable indicators in order to assess the success of the programme.
- That the DCSF had been over optimistic and had planned the programme poorly (something which the Committee said was systemic throughout the civil service) and as a result there was a lack of confidence that the 2023 completion date was achievable.
- That the DCSF and Partnership for Schools were complacent about the serious challenges facing the BSF programme and had wasted money by employing consultants to meet their own lack of skills.
- That Local Authorities and schools are provided with little support to achieve the educational aims of BSF.

The full report can be downloaded from the Committee's website via the attached link [Public Accounts Committee](#)

The new Schools Minister, Vernon Coaker and Tim Byles, Chief Executive of Partnership for Schools both challenged the findings of the Committee saying that its figures were out of date and the programme had moved on significantly since the collation of evidence for the report.

[DCSF & Partnership for Schools Comments](#)

Triple Science

Congratulations to those who noticed that in last week's newsletter we managed to place maths in triple science. Triple science is of course comprised of physics, chemistry and biology.

Chair's Blog

Clare's weekly blog can be viewed via the attached link [Chair's Blog](#).

Contact NGA:

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