

**Summary Notes from the Meeting of the
Association of Sandwell Governing Bodies Meeting
held at 6.15pm on 20th November 2019 at
Guardian House, West Bromwich**

Members of the ASGB Executive had a brief meeting prior to the start of the meeting to discuss future agendas and the ASGB Conference taking place on 16th May 2020. Venue will be the Metal Forming Centre by Junction 1 of the M5 and there is ample parking.

The key note speaker will be Prof. Mick Waters and we are currently finalising the various workshops which will follow.

Welcome and Apologies

Elaine Benbow, one of the ASGB co-chairs' opened the meeting and thanked the presenters and members.

Minutes of the Meetings held 10th July and 9th October 2019

Minutes from the above meetings were approved and there were no matters arising.

Update from Craig Felton, Director SIPS Education

Mr Felton advised that there was very little news nationally, from the DfE.

Recruitment and retention of governors was the biggest issued faced by Governing Boards, particularly in the Local Authority and Co-opted categories.

Six schools had above 30% vacancies and one school had 50% vacancies.

Ensuring that panels were quorate and met the legal criteria was a particular problem due to the increase in complaints, disciplinaries etc. Schools had resulted to reciprocal arrangements with other schools to overcome this issue, in some instances.

Any experienced governor willing to help out on panels should contact Mr Felton.

Asked what could be done to help solve the problem, Mr Felton advised that SIPS continued to try to recruit from banks, superstores, local businesses etc. but often the staff recruited did so to fulfil a CPD objective and did not stay once they realised the time commitment required.

Efforts to recruit also included advertising via payroll and appealing to retired school staff.

In addition, both SIPS and schools individually could use the NGA Inspiring Governance tool. <https://www.nga.org.uk/inspiringgovernance>

Mr Felton noted that Governing Boards did have the option, in accordance with regulations and if appropriate, to move governors from one category of governor to another

E.g. a co-opted governor could be moved to an LA governor or a parent governor could move to co-opted.

RSE/PHSE Presentation - Emily Morgan, Advisory Teacher for PHSE

The Chair introduced Ms. Morgan who introduced herself, saying that she was funded by Public Health and was in post to support every Sandwell school.

The presentation 'Exploring RSHE from the Perspective of School Governors' is attached (Appendix 1) together with two word documents specific to Primary and Secondary schools (Appendices 2&3). Additional comments/questions were as follows:

- UK since 2000 page: Everything on this page linked back to PHSE and was all still relevant to society today although not all was required to be taught under the new curriculum. Ofsted were however, very 'hot' on the nine categories under the Equality Act 2010.
- PHSE was now 'advisory' but did include topics such as economic awareness/financial education and staying safe. Schools needed to consider if these subjects were being covered elsewhere in the curriculum e.g. in maths, citizenship. The advice was not to panic by simply complying with the national curriculum at the expense of other valuable subjects.
- The driver from Student Voice was that PHSE provision should be allocated an hour a week but there was obviously so much more to cover.
- Why? Page: The UK Youth Parliament included 11-18 year olds that produced policies every year. 'Shake' was the youth parliament in Sandwell.
- Primary Schools page: Relationships and Health Education is statutory and there was no right to withdraw from the curriculum. Parents had the right however, to withdraw children from any sex education delivered in school, other than as part of the science curriculum. Note that the correct terminology for genitalia and the key facts around puberty were not considered sex education and must be taught as part of Relationship and Health Education. Ms. Morgan explained how important this was from a safeguarding perspective.
- Any concerns from parents should be addressed on an individual basis, focusing on safeguarding and the importance of dealing with issues at the right time.
- Asking if this was not a case of 'handing over' the responsibilities of parents to the school, Ms. Morgan advised that she was writing lesson plans and included parents' guides. This would consist of 5/6 lessons for Y1/2, Y3/4 and Y5/6; lots of work was being constantly updated. There was also a Sex Education Forum looking at parent training.
- Secondary Schools page: There was still a right to withdrawn from Sex Education (defined as intimate and sexual relationship). Noted however, that FGM, pornography and CSE related to safeguarding and were taught under Health and Relationships where there was no right of withdrawal. Obviously there was a need for clarity and a sample policy for schools was being written.
- Sandwell Relationship Curriculum page: Ms. Morgan was currently writing lesson plans for Y1-2, Y3-4, Y5-6 so staff could choose when to teach e.g. at the start of Y2 instead of the end of Y1, as they feel is appropriate for their class. In addition, teaching at the end of a year would hopefully mean that the teacher will have developed a more established relationship with parents. The lesson plans were expected to be finalised mid-January ready for consultation with parents.
- Protected Characteristics page: There was a short discussion about the Trojan Horse issues several years ago, the 'no outsiders' programme and the protests in Birmingham schools. Ms. Morgan emphasised that schools should be working with children rather than 'teaching' them; it was ok for them to disagree and teachers should only challenge the facts. Acknowledged that it would be more difficult to record discussions rather than written work. In response to a concern raised that young children might be influenced by other or even be bullied for their views, Ms. Morgan suggested distancing

techniques and reassured members that provision was available. It was important to emphasise that no child's views were wrong.

- Protected Characteristics page: Important to take into account the background of all pupils in respect of their religion/beliefs whilst complying with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010. Text in libraries needed to ensure that stereotypes were not pushed, for example. In primaries, perhaps talk in terms of 'parents' rather than in terms of 'mum and dad'. The point was made that children were likely to experience all sorts of families just by watching television so school was actually a safer place for them to learn.
- Key Issues for Governors page: Suggested that RSHE was not taught on a Friday afternoon as teachers would have no time to deal with any issues and it would be unfair on the pupils. Governors may wish to check with their schools on timetabling.
- Parental Consultation Process: Stressed that parents cannot veto the curriculum.
- Support within the LA page: Ms. Morgan prepared to support schools in the event of any problems and schools should contact her direct if necessary and take advantage of the other support available.
- Policies and curriculum would be sent to schools and copied to chairs/governors via the ASGB Support Officer.

The Chair thanked Ms. Morgan for her very informative presentation.

Budget Consultation - Steve Lilley LA Finance Business Partner

Mr Lilley kindly stood in for Rose Kerr to present the Budget Consultation on behalf of the LA. The presentation is attached (Appendix 4), provided the context to the issues that schools were being consulted upon and the timetable for response. The budget document and consultation response form are also attached for information.

Many of your schools will have already responded, hopefully in consultation with governors, who should be aware of how their school responded in order to comply with their responsibilities to oversee the budget.

Additional comments/response to questions as follows:

- A sub group of Schools Forum had been looking at the difficult issue of Primary/Secondary ratios which Sandwell had not yet changed, having been waiting for the introduction of the National Funding Formula.
- NFF Page: Sandwell was weighted heavily for deprivation and above the funding floor for this reason. Provisional LA funding 2020/21 was £317m but growth funding would impact on the Central Schools Services Block. Current figures excluded growth, more information about growth allocation would be available in December 2019. . Funding Floor of 1.84% to protect pupil-led per-pupil funding in real terms was the minimum;
- Key Elements Page: The new mobility factor is not yet fully understood. Teachers' pay grant and pension employment grant would continue to be paid separately from the NFF in 2020/21
- Other Changes Page: Sandwell had applied to the DfE to vary MFG outside the parameters set. This may not be necessary, depending upon the outcome of Budget Consultation; the LA was not looking to transfer any money, recognising schools need.
- General Adjustments Page: Sub-group had based the adjustments on the last available census, therefore there was a 'lag'.

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- Consultation Proposals: Three options for the primary/secondary ratio and the appendix allows schools to see impact of all three.
- BSF FM Update: Issues around St Michaels discussed.
- Schools with significant surplus balances: Mr Lilley agreed to comeback with details of the number of schools with balances above 10% of their total budget. It makes no difference whether the surplus had been allocated, it was a purely a matter of fact although there were still some issues to be clarified.
- MFG and Capping Gains Page: Would depend upon the outcome of the consultation.
- Central Schools Services Block: Although there was no scope to vary, it still had to be included in the consultation.

The Chair thanked Mr Lilley for his presentation.

Update from Executive members including meeting with James Morris MP

- The notes from our meeting with James Morris had been sent out to all members. As the result of the General Election might mean a change in MP representation, it was agreed that ASGB should continue to lobby on behalf of schools.
- The ASGB Conference was mentioned at the beginning of the meeting and we will keep you updated but please keep the 16th May 2020 to come along.

*Time got the better of us so the following was not discussed
but is provided for information*

Update on Chairs' Development

A second Leading Governance, Development for Chairs cohort was based in Sandwell, commencing on 1st December. If you are interested in registering, please do so as soon as possible by logging on to: <https://www.nga.org.uk/Training-and-Development/LeadingGovernance/Development-for-Chairs/booking.aspx>

Future meetings

Next meeting follows hot on the heels of this one!

We will be meeting on 4th December 6.15 in Guardian House. The theme of the meeting will be school finance and we hope that this will appeal particularly to governors who are members of finance/resources committees. The purpose is to help lesser experienced governors to better understand their responsibilities and to ask experience governors to share that experience; how they are providing support/challenge in the face of the difficulties that almost all schools are facing. Of course, as always, ALL governors are welcome to attend.

National Governance Association (NGA) West Midland Elections

We are very pleased to confirm that Lynn Howard was appointed to the NGA Board to represent the West Midlands. Congratulations to Lynn and thanks to all those who voted.