

Welcome to the April Monthly Bulletin. We hope you have had a restful Easter break, enjoying the sunshine. Our bulletin has been produced with the aim of keeping governors and clerks informed of the latest educational developments as they happen. The most effective way of using this briefing is to have it as an agenda item as part of your governing body meetings.

[Schools Financial Value Standard SFVS](#)

A reminder for maintained schools - the SFVS was due to be returned to the finance team by 31st March having been approved by the Full Governing body. This is a statutory requirement, please ensure that if you have not yet submitted to do so urgently.

[3 year Budget Approval](#)

Maintained school Governing boards need to ensure that they have approved the 3 yr budget plan and returned to the KCC Finance team by the 31st May 2017. In following the KCC School finance policy, the finance committee can do the workings by evaluating and recommending the three year budget plan for approval by the Full Governing Body, ensuring that it shows clear links to the School Improvement Plan. How do you evaluate the budget to ensure that it is meeting the priorities of the school? Have you looked at benchmarking before discussing the budget? Have you got a Full Governing Board meeting in place for approval of the Budget?

[Financial tools on Kelsi for Governing Boards](#)

Have you as a governing Board used the [financial tools](#) on Kelsi? These include the finance year planner for governors, Governing body financial skills audit which has a matrix for the financial management skills that best practice determines should be available within the governing body.

[KCC Compliance](#)

For Maintained Schools there is a programme of Compliance Visits which are undertaken to help provide assurance to Kent County Council's internal and external auditors that the local authority and schools have appropriate and robust controls in place to manage the school's resources and that areas of risk are being managed adequately and effectively. One of the areas which compliance focuses on is governance. The focussed areas within governance are summarised below;

GB minutes- quorate; last minutes approved, signed and dated; standing item business interests; committee decisions reported to FGB; Supporting documentation attached with minutes; any decision wording clearly states 'approved' or 'agreed' or 'ratified'

Business interests, including relationships- evidence of signed annually by all governors including associate members

Evidence of Governor financial skills/knowledge- from a skills matrix with at least 3 governors having a 'competent' rating. You may want to use the financial matrix highlighted under the Kelsi tools item.

Annual requirements by FGB- SFVS by 31st March; 3 year budget plan by 31st May; School Improvement Plan; Pay policy; Terms of reference including for finance and pay committee; code of conduct.

Governance decisions- annually review structure with any decisions in line with statutory requirements (including policies) and delegated responsibility; deadlines met with any follow up recommendations carried out.

How do you audit that your governing body is compliant?

[Academies Budget Forecast Return arrangements](#)

Peter Lauener, chief executive of EFA has written a [letter](#) on the 21st March to accounting officers at academy trusts with information about arrangements for collecting budget forecast information. In his letter, Peter explains new arrangements for academies financial reporting including a new Budget Forecast Return: Outturn (BFRO) that **all** academy trusts open as at 31 March 2017 must submit to the EFSA by 19 May 2017. The new return can be found [here](#). Has your Trust board arranged a date for the Board to approve this return?

[EFA becomes the EFSA](#)

The Secretary of State has announced that Education Funding Agency (EFA) and Skills Funding Agency (SFA) will be brought together to create one funding agency from 1 April 2017. The new agency will be called the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). ESFA's first working day will be Monday 3 April 2017

[Condition Improvement Fund \(CIF\) for academies](#)

ESFA has published the Condition Improvement Fund 2017 to 2018 [outcome](#). There was funding of £466 million for 1,435 projects across 1,184 academies and sixth-form colleges. If your school was successful more information will be provided by the EFSA in the week commencing 24 April 2017.

[Summer District Governor Briefings](#)

In term 5 there will be an academy focus to the District Governor briefings. This will be delivered by Ana Rowley, Academies Conversion Team Manager, whom will focus on the current policy position and its evolution over time; how to consider the strategic future options for your school including due diligence and the support that KCC can offer both prior and after any strategic decision. Each area will have one district governor presentation on governors responsibilities when making a strategic decision on the future of the school. These will be held from ;

North - 10 May 2017 at Seal Primary School

South - 11 May 2017 at the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce

East - 25 May 2017 at The Canterbury Academy

West - 15 May 2017 at Southborough Primary

The other area district briefings will be running as usual. Please refer to [CPD online](#) to book onto the briefings. The focus for the Area Governance Officer networking session at all briefings will be on virtual governance. We look forward to seeing as many governors as possible at our district briefings. Please try to send at least one member from each governing body to attend these briefings so that they can report back and share, enabling best practice. How have you as a governing body ensured that you have a governor attending to cascade back to you the latest information?

[National Chairs Development Programme](#)

We now have confirmed dates for the new cohort. This will be the last licensed course that the National College will run. The programme is suitable for aspiring chairs, those new to the role and experienced chairs. The programme consists of 3 face to face units with each unit focusing on an essential element of being an effective chair; the role of the chair as the leader; leading the governing body and effective governance; leading change and continuous improvement. The dates for the day long face to face sessions at the Kent Invicta Chamber of commerce are Friday 30th June 2017, Friday 24th November 2017, Friday 23rd March 2018. The cost for the course is £400 with a scholarship of £320 meaning that the school would only pay £80. The scholarship can be claimed for two applicants in one academic year. We would recommend that any aspiring Vice Chair or Chair that has NOT undertaken this course considers applying. For more details and to apply for the course please click [here](#). As a part of succession planning how as a governing body are you going to use this opportunity?

[National Clerks Development Programme](#)

This development programme incorporates a range of learning methods and is intended to provide you with the opportunity to further develop your professional skills to effectively support your governing body. It includes: face to face sessions to develop understanding of the education environment, role and function of being a clerk, and the skills, knowledge, and behaviours for effective clerking; school-based activities to deepen and extend your learning in your school; opportunities to reflect and develop your practice at each stage. The programme is for new or experienced clerks and takes about 35 hours over a 12 month period. The cost of the programme is £400 though the school can apply for one scholarship of £320 per year for this course, meaning that it will only cost the school £80. The dates for the two day long face to face sessions are 6 July 2017 and 9 November 2017 at The Village Hotel, Maidstone. For more details click [here](#) and to apply click [here](#). Chairs are you going to recommend this course to your clerk?

[Ofsted announce a new investigation into the curriculum.](#)

In her first speech as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman announced a major Ofsted investigation into how effectively schools - from early years through primary, secondary and further education - are using the curriculum to provide children with the best education. The study will not review the national curriculum itself, but rather how schools are implementing it in the classroom. The final report will be published later in the year. For more information on all the areas covered within her speech, [click here](#)

[Identity verification for new chairs of trustees](#)

From April 7th 2017 there is a new form for **new** chairs of trustees in academies, free schools and independent schools to verify their identity. This form must be completed and sent with the DBS application. For more information click [here](#)

[DfE statistical school pupil absence figures 2015/16](#)

The DfE has released a statistical report on pupil absence in primary and secondary schools for the 2015 to 2016 academic year. For more information click [here](#). How are you as a governing board going to use this information when discussing pupil absence?

[NGA change of name](#)

The National Governors Association has changed its name from the 1st April to the National **Governance** Association. The name change reflects the significant changes in school governance over the last decade. For example, those governing in some schools (academies) are trustees not governors. NGA also wanted to recognise the vital role of clerks and governance managers, many of whom are NGA members, regularly accessing the charity's guidance, legal advice and training services.

[Governor bespoke training courses](#)

Governor services is delivering a new bespoke course to governing boards entitled self evaluation for good governance. To date this has already been well received. The session ends with the identification of three key areas for the governing body to develop and strengthen. For further information please contact your Area Governance Officer.

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