



GATHER round



EDUCATION NEWS FROM THE GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION
THROUGHOUT HULL AND EAST RIDING

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We're busy planning our next conference and would like suggestions for workshop themes. Let us know what you'd like via email and read more about the conference in Section 8.

It's Party Time!

Carol concerts, nativity plays and parties in our schools are just around the corner and there's nothing quite like them to get the festive spirit going. As each year draws to a close, it's a good time to look back at what we've done in our schools and perhaps make some resolutions about what we'd like to achieve in the coming year.

Here at GATHER, we've had another busy year. We presented our eighth annual conference in March and put on seminars in April and October; we've represented you, our member schools, at LA conferences and as the governor representative on the East Riding School Improvement Partnership (ERSIP); we've attended regional and national conferences put on by the NGA and been to events held by other local governors' associations.

Our website has been refreshed and contains regularly updated news and items of interest to governors but we are still short of regular contributors to our forum. Register today and have your say!

And of course there's this, our twice-termly newsletter. We hope you enjoy reading it and that it provides you with information that's helpful to you in your role of governor. We welcome all governors' news and views so please do e-mail them to info@ga-ther.org, post them at www.ga-ther.org or tweet them to @ga_ther.

We look forward to receiving them and in the meantime wish you a restful Christmas and a happy New Year.

1. GAtHER AGM

The GAtHER AGM took place immediately before our annual seminar on 13th October. There were 40 attendees present representing 22 schools, of which 19 were GAtHER members with voting rights. Sue Gollop, GAtHER Chair, gave her report and the annual statement of accounts was presented. There were no elections as the current members of the council are in the third year of their four-year term of office. There was just one motion put forward by council member Vince Barrett regarding membership subscriptions which was passed unopposed. You can read more about what this means for members on in Section 9.

There was no other business.

2. GAtHER Autumn Seminar

We're aware that recent editions of GAtHERround have featured many articles on academisation but it's a subject that's not going to go away. On October 13th, we hosted the third annual GAtHER seminar at the Willerby Manor Hotel and this year we welcomed the Regional Schools' Commissioner for East Midlands and the Humber, Jennifer Bexon-Smith (right). Jennifer gave us a detailed presentation on the growth of multi-academy trusts (MATs) and the government's plans for academies and their governance. As we know, the East Riding has very few academies and Hull very many but across the region we currently have a number of free-standing academies, some of which are free schools; academies that are run by local MATs; academies that are run by national MATs and groups of academies that are equal partners in what have become known locally as 'umbrella MATs' where each academy upon conversion, keeps its previous Head and governing board. Add into this mix the federated groups of schools that remain as LA maintained schools which share a Headteacher and governing board, and you have a recipe for confusion to say the least.



So what's the government's current vision? It's still that every school will eventually become an academy, but all will be members of a multi-academy trust (MAT) that has an outstanding 'lead' academy. MATs themselves will be placed in one of these categories:

- Starter Trusts: 5 or 6 schools with between 1200 and 1500 children between them
- Established Trusts: 5 to 15 schools with up to 5000 children between them
- Regional Trusts: 15-30 schools
- System Trusts: 30 or more schools

The starter and established trusts are likely to be made up of academies in a local area, one of which is defined as the lead academy. There will be a Trust Members' Board of about 5 people who are similar to a company's shareholders and have ultimate control over the operation of the Trust. Below them will be a Board of Trustees of between 7 and 11 people. They are similar to company directors and have the day to day responsibility

for the running of the Trust's academies. Below them will be Local Governing Boards or Advisory Committees as the NGA prefers to call them, one for each academy, with governors appointed by the trustees.

The larger Regional and System Trusts will have a similar structure but by their very nature as large regional or national organisations, their members and trustees will be much more remote from their lead academies and will have no direct input into the running of the local constituent academies. The responsibilities of local governing boards for their individual academies will be defined in each MAT Trustees' Scheme of Delegation but these will vary immensely as no two MAT schemes are likely to be the same.

However, if your school or academy is an NGA member, you may have seen an article by Fay Holland in December's *Governing Matters* about the growth of what are now being called 'Community MATs' which use a structure remarkably similar to the umbrella model described above. Fay says:

"The best MATs we've worked with have developed a collaborative model, with all the schools in the group drawing on each other's strengths and addressing any weaknesses together. We increasingly see MATs moving away from the model of one 'outstanding' school as the 'lead school' supporting all the others."

In other words, the exact opposite of the government's proposed 'lead academy' model - and what about the grammar schools held in such high esteem by the prime minister? Will new grammars have to be in a MAT or will there be Grammar Academy Trusts (GATs)? So many questions and very few answers. So there we are then. Utter confusion. If, like us, you are now completely bewildered by the current situation, we have attempted to put into a flow chart in Section 3 showing the differences in the way state schools and academies are governed.

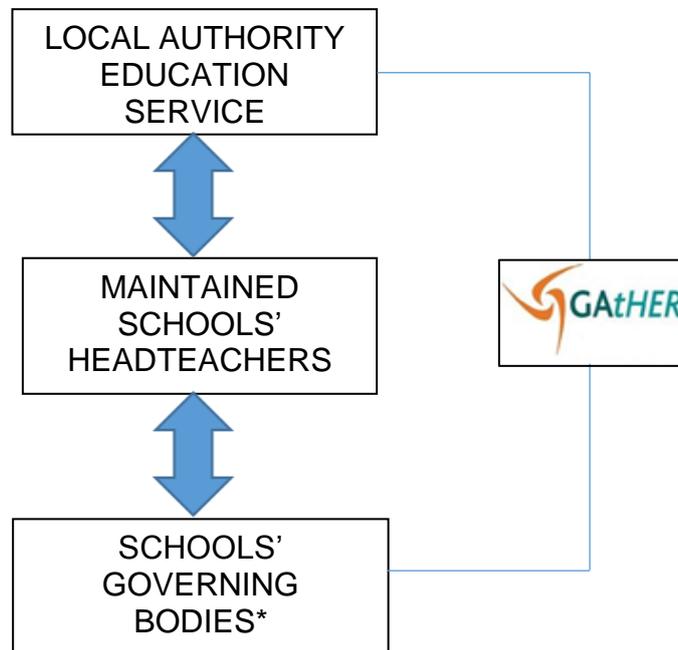
Closing the seminar were the two LA directors, Kevin Hall, Director of Children, Families and Schools in the East Riding and Graham Talbot, Interim City Learning & Skills Manager in Hull. Both were upbeat about rising standards and attainment in their schools and academies but had to field some challenging questions about the future of education in their respective Councils which wasn't surprising given the scenario described above. It was clear that many East Riding schools, particularly the primary schools, are not considering academisation and could not see any advantages in doing so. One has to wonder, given that this government is likely to be in power for the next 3½ years and with the possibility of being re-elected in 2020, will the academy steamroller soon become unstoppable?

Despite the controversial theme of the evening, completed evaluation forms were overwhelmingly positive and reflected the need for events such as this. If anyone would like Jennifer Bexon-Smith's or Kevin Hall's presentation, just ask and we'll e-mail you copies. You'll find a summary of participants' evaluations of this event on our website under 'Resources/Downloads'.

3. Governance at a glance

Following the seminar above, we felt it would be a good idea to put into flowcharts the differences between maintained schools' governance and academies' governance.

MAINTAINED SCHOOLS' GOVERNANCE

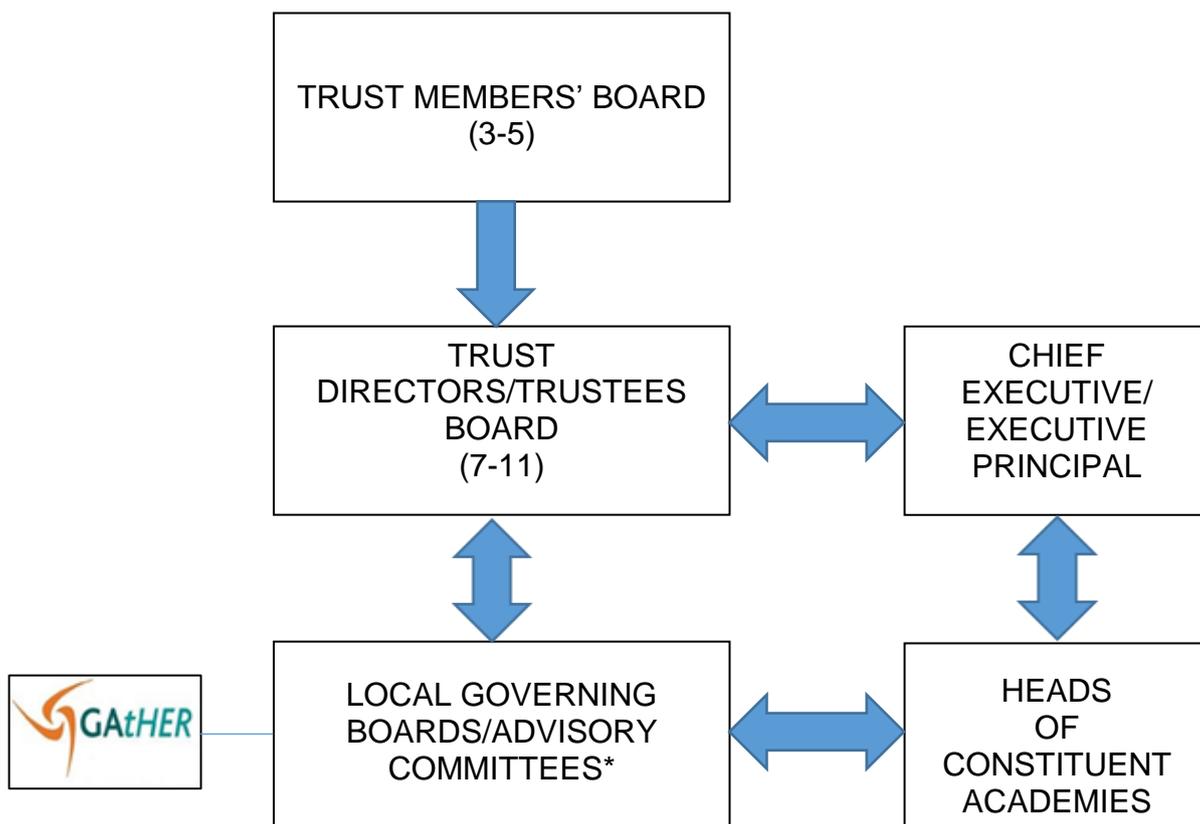


*Governors are elected by parents and staff, nominated by the LA and co-opted by governors. Full Governing Body meetings are usually clerked by LA Governor Services.

This is the model for governance of schools that has been in place in state-maintained schools for many years. The LA has a two-way link with its Headteachers and provides policies, advice and specialist services such as legal and payroll. Heads have a two-way link with governors who are responsible for approving appointments, policies, curriculum, budget, health and safety, safeguarding and Head's appraisal. Governors also have a responsibility for ensuring the maintenance of site and buildings and Heads are almost always members of the governing body. GATHER sits as a link between the LA and governing bodies, working in partnership to ensure governors are connected, informed and supported.

This system has worked reasonably well as evidenced by OFSTED scrutiny in good and outstanding schools. But where leadership has been less effective, there have been weaknesses in that LA policies and procedures may have been automatically 'rubber stamped' by governors, paying scant regard to what they might mean for the running of their schools. There has also been the danger that some governors have seen their responsibility as doing the nice things such as hearing children read or being involved in sports day. This is all well and good but it is a misunderstanding of the difference between operational and strategic management of their schools. There may also have been the view by governors that the Head always knows best and they must ratify all his/her decisions. Times have changed and the role of all governors has become much more accountable. Consequently, the model for governance of academies is a little more complex.

MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST GOVERNANCE



*Governors are appointed by the Trust Board according to skills required. Responsibilities of Local Governing Board/Committee is determined by Trustees' Scheme of Delegation. Meetings are clerked by provider of choice.

In this model, the structure of the Trust and its services are determined by the Members' Board. They have nothing to do with its operation but are ultimately accountable to the Secretary of State for its record. The Trust Directors' Board is responsible for the operation of all the Trust's constituent academies and will employ specialists to deliver services to all such as payroll, sites management, legal and finance. Local Governing Boards are responsible for overseeing day-to-day procedures in their individual academy, determined by what is in their Trustees' Scheme of Delegation. Executive Principals and Heads of School are not appointed as trustees or governors but will work closely with them to keep them informed. GATHER is not likely to work in partnership with Trust Boards but will work directly with academy local governing boards/advisory committees.

4. Who's in charge?

Do you regularly challenge or celebrate the personal qualities and attributes of the person responsible for the day-to-day operation of your school or academy? Probably not but new research by the Centre for High Performance into the way educational institutions are now run has revealed some quite startling facts. Their work found that Headteachers (or principals, Executive Heads or whatever they are deemed to be these days) tend to be one of five types.



"Surgeons" are those who act decisively to turn around schools judged to be requiring improvement or inadequate. On arriving in such a school, surgeon Heads find ways to exclude final-year pupils who are likely to damage results; they prioritise resources into 'cramming' exam or test-year students and quickly 'lose' those members of staff they consider to be performing below expected standards. Surgeon Heads can have a dramatic and immediate impact through focusing on short-term success and they tend to be rewarded the most financially and through positive media reporting.

"Architects" are careful planners. They concentrate on improving standards of behaviour as a first step before working on improving the quality of teaching and learning. They value parental engagement and see themselves as working in partnership with their community. They rarely exclude pupils for continual behavioural issues and gradually replace poorly-performing staff.

"Soldiers" tend to tailor provision to existing available resources and finances. Their priority is financial probity and so they look for ways to cut costs and put in place whatever measures are necessary to meet the school's budgetary constraints.

"Accountants" are business-orientated Heads who will do all they can to increase the size of their school as a strategy for improving its finances. They are less focused on curriculum provision and are more concerned about promoting the image of their school in order to attract numbers.

"Philosophers" are the largest group and may now be regarded as old fashioned. These are the Heads who see themselves as leaders by example and who place importance on pedagogy. They will have built the provision over time and are proud to have seen their school judged as good or better in the past. Consequently, they don't feel it necessary to change much about the established systems, curriculum or staff employed to teach it.

Surgeon Heads, like football managers, don't tend to stick around once they have made their dramatic changes but will move on to replicate their success somewhere else. If they moved significant resources from younger pupils to focus on those taking exams or tests, eventually whoever succeeds them will have to deal with those pupils whose education may have been damaged at the time when resources were diverted from them into older pupils.

Soldiers and accountants do their best to secure the viability of their schools but are likely to get caught out on the resulting lower quality of teaching, learning and provision of appropriate curricula for all their pupils. Governors will need to keep a close eye on what additional funding such as the pupil premium is actually being spent on.

Philosophers' and architects' methods keep the ship steady and so they leave themselves open to criticisms of complacency and of not moving fast enough to ensure higher placing in the league tables. They may find that when Ofsted next comes to call, the 'rules' of inspection have changed dramatically and it is not unknown for a school judged to be good or outstanding four or five years ago to be judged RI or even inadequate today.

Unsurprisingly, surgeons are the most sought-after Heads. The research reveals that they are paid, on average, £154,000 a year. Philosophers are paid £103,000 a year; soldiers

and accountants both get around £100,000 a year and architects just £86,000. Surgeons are also the most likely to get awards. Almost two-thirds have a national honour such as a knighthood. The NGA recently admonished governors for allowing pay to increase to ridiculous levels, citing the prime minister's pay of around £142,000 as a benchmark.

Ideally, you'd like someone who is a mix of all five types, depending on context and the current position of your school. That's not going to be the case so as governors you will need to be satisfied that, whichever type most closely describes them, your Head is working in the best interests of all pupils and does not focus on a particular group. You will also need to be sure that whatever systems they put in place are sustainable because if you appoint a surgeon to succeed an architect or vice-versa, one thing's for sure. There will be changes! Whoever's at the helm, always remember that you as a governing board are not there to simply rubber-stamp senior leaders' decisions; you are there to question and challenge whilst at the same time being critically supportive. Not an easy job we volunteer to do, is it?

Read more about the CFHP's research [here](#).

5. Hull Children's University comes to the East Riding

On November 7th, the media widely reported that nearly half the children in some parts of the UK are living in poverty. In Hull, that number of children is currently around 16,000 and they are unlikely to have access to the opportunities that more advantaged children are given. Many of them have never been anywhere beyond the city and some have never even ventured into the city centre. Twenty years ago the Hull Children's University was formed to address this very issue. The HCU is a charity set up to raise Hull children's aspirations by building their confidence through the provision of learning activities they would otherwise not have been able to experience. These include theatre visits, projects with local businesses, expeditions to London and trips to the many places of interest throughout the Yorkshire and Humber area. The charity works with over 80% of Hull primary schools and 30% of secondary schools and at a launch event at New Pasture Lane Primary School in Bridlington on November 8th (right) announced that it has expanded into the East Riding to include eight schools located in Bridlington, Hornsea and Withernsea. Have a look at HCU's work [here](#) and if you feel children in your school would benefit from what's on offer, give them a call.



East Riding Lord Lieutenant Hon Susan Cunliffe-Lister (centre) at the HCU launch event

6. Ask GATHER

We've been asked a straightforward question which unfortunately requires a less than straightforward answer. The question is this:

“Will there still be parent governors on MAT governing bodies?”

It would be great if the answer was a simple ‘Yes’ but it's rather more complicated than that. As you'll have seen in Section 3 above, the structure of MATs makes the management

and governance of academies very different. If you are currently a governor in a maintained school, you will be a member of the school's governing body and you will have a title such as 'co-opted', 'parent', 'staff' or 'local authority'. Co-opted governors are invited by the governing body to join them, LA governors are nominated by the authority and both parent and staff governors are elected by their constituent bodies.

Once a school becomes an academy, all that changes. Each academy should have a local governing board or committee but, as we reported in GATHERround Issue 104 last March, the E-ACT academy group had announced its intention to do away with local boards altogether.

However, most MATs have retained a local board for each of their academies, made up of appointed governors that between them have a set of skills that the MAT Trustees deem to be required. Anyone can apply to the Trust to be a governor on a local board but everyone will have to provide a CV so that skills can be identified. Most Trusts will want to appoint a governor who is a parent of a child at the academy but if you are a parent who feels you have no professional qualifications or experience, don't be put off applying to be a governor. If you can demonstrate that you have an interest in education - and not just the education of your own child - then you will still be considered. This is to prevent a parent being appointed who thinks they can change the way the academy operates to meet the needs of their child. Yes it did used to happen! However, trustees are free to select who they want to be governors so the old titles will go and members of local governing boards will just be called 'governors' or 'committee members'. The term of office is likely to remain as four years.

Here's what Justine Greening told the Education Select Committee in October with regard to parent governors:

"I don't think we should be saying that MATs don't need to have parent governors. I think parent governors play a vital role. One way we can ensure that schools who are doing a less good job improve is getting parents more involved. When schools turn around it's when parents become more engaged and more invested in the school's success and that helps build the school from the outside as well as the hard work teachers are doing on the inside."

That flies in the face of Nicky Morgan's ill-fated white paper *Educational Excellence Everywhere* which contained the proposal to scrap the requirement for academies to have at least two parent governors. To express an interest in becoming a governor in an academy, you will need to contact the MAT that runs it. Contact details will be on their website.

7. Regional and national conferences

We've been busy this term, attending national and regional conferences on your behalf. On 1st October, Sue Gollop and Vince Barrett attended the NGA Regional Conference in Sheffield where the keynote speaker was Jennifer Bexon-Smith who outlined the government's plans for academisation as she did in our autumn seminar twelve days later. We also looked at the role of the Executive Headteacher and governors' responsibilities for ensuring financial effectiveness. NGA Chief Executive Emma Knights talked about

governor skills and development, reflected in the NGA/Wellcome Trust's [A Framework for Governance](#).

On 10th November, Vince Barrett attended the Calderdale Governors' Association regional conference in Wakefield which General Secretary of the NAHT, Russell Hobby, presented a very balanced view of current government policy. He made it clear that many small schools have benefited from academisation through the increased support and the sharing of resources they receive from their Trust. At the other end of the spectrum, schools can find themselves worse off because their Trust is so remote and is responsible for so many academies that they get far less support than they did from their LA. We also heard from HMI Belita Scott, who was a keynote speaker at our 2015 conference, about updates in the inspection of governance of which there were many.

Finally for this term, Vince Barrett attended the NGA National Conference in Manchester on 19th November. The keynote speaker was Sir David Carter, National Schools' Commissioner, who presented a very strong case for good governance. He said there are currently 1.3 million children attending inadequate schools which is unacceptable. Governors in all schools must accept they will be held accountable for the performance (outstanding, good, RI or inadequate) of their schools and must be sure that they fully understand the issues facing them and provide critical support to ensure their school is amongst the best. Interestingly, he said that governors can get great benefit from attending other schools' governing board meetings and that all MATs in a locality should work in partnership to support one another. Sounded to me like re-inventing local education authorities!

If anyone would like a copy of Belita Scott's or Sir David's presentations, email us and we'll send them to you.

8. Governors' Annual Conference 2017

Now for a conference still to come. The ninth joint GATHER/Local Authorities Governors' conference is scheduled to take place on **Saturday 25th March 2017** probably at Bishop Burton College although the venue has yet to be confirmed. The title this year is 'Making the Ordinary Extraordinary' and the keynote speaker is John Tomsett, headteacher at Huntington School near York. John has become well known for his sometimes controversial views on education via his blog, <https://johntomsett.com> that led to his book, *This Much I Know about Love over Fear: creating a culture of truly great teaching*. It was selected by Schools Week as a pick of 2015. If John speaks at conferences, people flock to hear him. Just as an appetiser, John is quoted as saying "*I don't give a stuff what Ofsted says if what we're doing is right.*"

We're sure that John will provide us with stories about his headship experiences that we can take back into our schools. Our school performers this year are from North Ferriby Primary who will be providing a musical ensemble and, as always, there will be a range of workshops to choose from. If you have any ideas for workshop themes, let us know.

We will be keeping the conference fees the same as last year at £60.00 per delegate for GATHER member schools and £75.00 per delegate for non-members. Yet another benefit of GATHER membership! You will receive more information about the conference and how to apply for places in the next GATHERround early in the new year.

9. GAtHER Membership fees

The motion put forward at our October AGM proposed that the annual GAtHER subscription fee for 2017/18 will remain at £15.00 but will be levied per governing board and not per MAT. This is to ensure academies that are a member of a MAT but retain a local governing board are charged individually but Federations with a single governing board for all its constituent schools will only incur a single charge. All maintained schools are unaffected and will continue to be charged the £15.00 annual fee. This will run from 1st January 2017.

We feel that this offers remarkable value in that if your school or academy is represented by just one governor at our annual conference, you will in effect be getting GAtHER membership for free!

10. And finally...

The latest delay to the publication of the new national funding formula for England's schools has seen many in our region really struggling to balance their books. This is especially an issue for small East Riding schools, located as they are in one of the worst-funded authorities in England. The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) has said primaries with fewer than 200 pupils and secondaries with fewer than 600 will soon 'fall off a cliff' financially unless new funds are found.

Until we know the outcome of the revised funding formula, Governing Boards at these small schools are likely to find it extremely difficult to provide a full curriculum and maintain the teaching and support staff infrastructure needed to run the school whilst at the same time meeting the costs of unfunded pay rises, national insurance and pension contributions.

In order to provide a forecast of what could happen with the new funding formula, teaching unions NUT and ATL have produced an interactive map of England's schools which shows their estimate of how plans to redistribute funding could impact on every institution. Have a look at it [here](#), type in your school's name and see how much you could lose or gain. It's interesting, if a little scary!

Meanwhile, the Department for Education has said:

"In reality the schools budget has been protected and in 2016-17 totals over £40bn, the highest ever on record."

In the Chancellor's autumn statement on 23rd November, no new money for existing schools was announced although a pledge of £50million a year over the next four years was made to fund the Prime Minister's promise of the expansion of grammar schools across England.

Are you a governor in a small school heading for the cliff edge? If so, what are you doing to prevent your school falling off it? Let us know.

***Last minute important reminder: Make sure you read your school's FFT Data Dashboard for Governors. Now available for both primary and secondary schools**