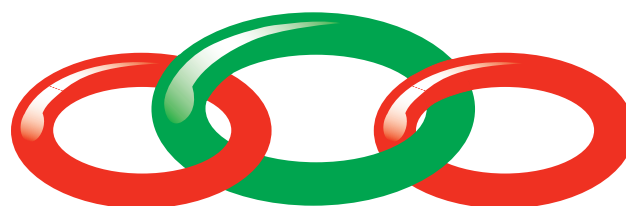


CADWYN



ALL WALES CENTRE *for* GOVERNOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH
and
GOVERNORS WALES

SCHOOL UNIFORM AND OTHER COSTS OF SCHOOLING: VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES IN WALES

School uniform is one of the most obvious ways of identifying a school and its pupils. In this article, the School Governance and Revenue Branch of the Welsh Assembly Government look at the findings from research into the benefits of school uniform and suggest ways governing bodies might consider the cost implications for governors, parents and carers.

School uniform is widely acknowledged as being a positive aspect of school life. The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) strongly encourages governing bodies to have a school uniform policy in place, drawn up after appropriate consultation with parents and pupils. Properly developed, a school uniform can provide a sense of identity and cohesion, promote positive behaviour and reduce peer pressure for pupils to dress in designer fashions - all of which can be beneficial to schools, pupils and parents.

However, it is recognised that the cost of school uniform can be a significant burden on some families. WAG expects governing bodies to give high priority to the cost considerations of school uniforms, as set out in the WAG Guidance for Governing Bodies on School Uniform and Appearance Policies. If you haven't read the guidance, it can be accessed using the following link:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/uniform/?lang=en>

Some parents have concerns about having no or limited choice of where they buy school uniform; schools requiring costly uniform items with logos; and school uniform policies that require lengthy lists of uniform items and PE kit, often in specific colours or logos.

In addition to the costs involved with school uniform, it has also been recognised that a range of other additional school related costs place financial burdens on families such as school trips, activities, events and classroom materials.

The WAG was keen to understand the impact of these issues in more detail, and commissioned BMG Research in 2009 to explore the views of parents/carers, schools and young people in Wales on the validity, usefulness and benefits of having a school uniform, their views and experiences on the cost and availability of uniform items, and to explore the impact of the wider costs of schooling.

The research considered:

- children and young people's views and experiences of school uniforms;
- how many schools have specific or sole school uniform requirements or whether they are more widely available;
- views on the cost of school uniforms and the extent to which this can place some families at a disadvantage;
- whether schools consult with parents when developing a school uniform policy;
- how the wider costs associated with schooling can impact on families; and
- the availability, role and awareness of financial support.

SUMMARY OF REPORT FINDINGS

School Uniform Costs

99% of schools have a school uniform. The most commonly required items are jumpers, fleeces, cardigans, skirts, trousers, school bags and shoes. Around 80% of tops (sweatshirts / fleeces etc) have to have a badge or logo. Mostly these and other items such as ties and blazers are only available from one specialist retailer.

The majority of respondents (74%) reported they were happy with the cost of school uniform; those that were not were more likely to be among low income households. Overall, 42% of respondents reported experiencing some level of financial difficulty when buying their child's school uniform – as would be expected, this was more prevalent amongst families with lower household incomes.

PE / Sports kit

The majority of respondents (86%) reported that there was a PE / sports kit requirement for their child, mostly for shorts, shirt and trainers. In the majority of cases they were not required to be logoed, except for t-shirts/tops in around 50% of cases.



The majority of parents (74%) were happy with the costs associated with PE/ sports kit. A minority of parents (10%) said they had not bought an item of PE / sports kit because of the cost. This was more likely to be the case amongst low income households

School trips

Around 75% of parents were happy with the amount of school trips they were asked to contribute towards with around 66% being broadly happy with the costs associated with school trips. More parents from lower income households were more likely to express they were unhappy with the costs.

The research found that 10% of parents had not sent their child on a day trip because of the cost and 20% had not sent their child on a residential trip because of the cost. Around 50% of respondents felt pressurised into contributing to the cost of school trips.

Support with the costs of schooling

There appeared to be a lack of awareness about support that might be available to families, particularly for those on benefits who could access some support with the cost of residential trips or support by way of school uniform grants.

The majority of parents (66%) indicated that there were no opportunities to purchase second hand uniform items at their school, although the schools in the research indicated that a higher proportion have such a facility.

Points that Governing Bodies should consider

The research indicates that although families feel the financial strain of providing school uniform and other school costs for their children, they are supportive

of school uniforms. Costs increase as children move through secondary school. Whilst it appears that some schools have found ways of managing the difficulties that some families can face, it appears that schools tend to play down support that they can offer and families may not be aware of the support available.

A number of recommendations have emerged from the research, most of which relate to school uniform and are centred on sharing best practice. They also refer to help with the cost of school trips and other school activities. Governing bodies should be mindful of the financial difficulties that some families face with schooling costs and should consider:

- the cost implications for parents when setting or reviewing a school uniform policy;
- ensuring that uniform items are affordable and widely available from a range of retailers;
- parents' accessibility to school uniform suppliers;
- reviewing the requirement for logoed school uniform items and allowing parents to sew logos onto items themselves;
- exploring options for buying, selling or loaning second hand uniform;
- the cost implications for parents regarding school trips; and
- raising parents' awareness of support that is available for school uniform and for the cost of school trips.

The full report, its findings and recommendations can be found at:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/researchandevaluation/research/schooluniform/?lang=en>

MAKING DATA MORE ACCESSIBLE AND MEANINGFUL

Leighton Andrews, the Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning, made a landmark speech on 2nd February in which he proposed a number of far-reaching reforms for Welsh education. In this article the Welsh Assembly Government School Improvement Team consider changes to be introduced which are intended to make data more accessible and meaningful to parents and public.

The Minister's speech on 2nd February highlighted the important role of both Governors and data.

At the heart of this is the Assembly Government's intention to make data more transparent, accessible and meaningful. The Minister was at pains to point out, though, that this does not mean a return a league tables. However it does underline the importance of engaging with data and using it as a key tool in the drive to raise standards.

A number of small changes to statutory requirements will soon be considered by the Assembly. Subject to Assembly approval governors will, from next year,

need to include the comparative report provided by the Assembly showing end of key stage results in their annual report. The comparative reports show results in context, setting out a school's results alongside the local authority's performance and the performance across Wales. As well as looking at the most recent set of results the report will show performances over a number of years, so it will be possible to detect trends over time. The graphical nature is intended to make data more accessible to parents and others than tables of numbers. Also all schools will report the same information in the same way and it will be provided by the Assembly so reducing workload.



Plans also include formalising the role of the All Wales Core Data Set in the self evaluation and target setting processes. Governors will be required to note in their annual report the key points arising from the school's self evaluation and consideration of the All Wales Core Data Sets (for primary and secondary schools). Targets will also need to draw on the self evaluation findings so that some specific targets relate to key areas for development. Governors are already required to include details of the school's targets, and progress against the previous year's targets in their annual reports.

The Ffynnon system is an online tool that enables schools to access their All Wales Core Data Set. Each school has a username and password to the system. The password, and the data set, belongs to the school

as a whole; we expect schools to share and discuss data about comparative performance openly and honestly with the governing body. The schools should work to support governors in their interpretation and use of the data.

Each school needs to consider how best to balance the requirement for governors to have access to the data they need to help them carry out their duties with good data management practice. However, there appears to be a bit of an 'urban myth' about restrictions on access to Ffynnon that we'd like to dispel. There is no specific barrier to governors being able to access the All Wales Core Data Set on Ffynnon and we would certainly recommend that the Chairs of governing bodies have access to this important information.

FROM THE CENTRE MANAGER

Although the Centre has been involved in a number of different activities since the last edition of "Cadwyn", it would be strange indeed if I didn't comment on the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning Leighton Andrews' speech on the 2nd February. Clearly, there's a lot to take on board, but the two items which are likely to have the greatest impact on school governors are, first, the introduction of statutory training for governors and clerks. Perhaps, though, we should not be surprised by this as the second point of direct concern to governors made by the Minister is that a school will not pass an

Estyn inspection unless it can show that its governing body has discussed performance data, and particularly the family of schools data, and has introduced plans to improve the school's standing. The Minister, though, did not specify how inspectors would judge if, or how well, governors had considered the data relating to their school. No doubt this will emerge in the near future as will the type of training which will be mandatory for governors. We live in interesting times.

Steve Gullick

CONVERSATIONS

The importance of high quality clerking has long been recognized by governing bodies, but the role of the clerk has been brought into sharper focus by Education Minister, Leighton Andrews' recent speech on proposed educational reforms. In this article, editor, Steve Gullick interviews Steve Cresswell, a very experienced Caerphilly local authority governing body clerk.

S.G. How long have you been clerking school governing bodies, Steve?

S.C. The temptation would be to say too long and perhaps some of my longest serving governors would agree with me! I can still remember the first meeting I attended way back in 1990. The Governor Support Division had just been set up on the back of the legislation that extended Local Management of Schools. I must say that it felt like home from home because earlier in my career I had been clerk to a number of Council Committees but that did not prepare me for the variety of issues that I would face with governing bodies.

21 Years! Now I say it, it seems like a lifetime but the time has flown because there are always fresh

challenges facing governing bodies. I just hope I have the energy to keep up with them.

S.G. Have you clerked for both Primary and Secondary schools?

S.C. You name it I've clerked it. Comprehensive, Primary, Special, Junior, Infant: Welsh Medium (although I don't speak Welsh), Roman Catholic, Voluntary Controlled, Voluntary Aided. I think that's about it. It doesn't really matter though because every governing body is different. After all they are organisations that rely on people and all people are different.

S.G. What would you say are the key roles of a governing body clerk?



S.C. It would seem obvious to say that minute writing is the most important but my experience tells me that there are a number of key roles of a clerk. There is a misconception that clerks are just minute takers and nothing else. Of course, accurate minute taking by the clerk is vitally important for a governing body to function effectively, but good clerks must also have knowledge of regulations and policies. And in meetings they must be able to give advice on procedural and legal matters and even help in directing a meeting if the need arises, and at the same time retain the trust and confidence of the Chair and Headteacher.

Maybe it would be helpful if I suggested the qualities I think a clerk should have. Based on my experience, I would say a clerk needs to be able to listen carefully in order to understand governors' concerns and needs and, whenever possible, try to anticipate governors' requirements. This certainly saves a lot of time. A clerk must also be a good communicator to ensure that governors understand and follow statute and policy properly. And this is not as easy as it may seem. I frequently talk to my colleagues and we all agree that each governing body has a different character and you have to adapt to support the governors in the manner in which they feel most comfortable.

So to sum up, I would say that the main roles of the governing body clerk are

- Record accurately

- Advise appropriately, especially ensuring that governing body meetings are legally and procedurally correct.

- Support generously.

S.G. And what would you say are the greatest challenges or potential problems?

S.C. I think that there are always challenges to individual governing bodies but more generally governors have to be aware of the focus of the Education Minister, Leighton Andrews' recent speech. The repercussions from that WILL impact on governors. The management of performance data and how this will be used in school improvement is an obvious area which will have a huge impact on governors' work. Also the likelihood of federation is drawing closer and inevitably this will have an effect on some, or maybe many, governing bodies.

As for challenges for the immediate and medium term; first of all, dealing with fallout from reduced public expenditure such as redundancies and general reduction in funding for schools. There will undoubtedly be a closer scrutiny of the role of governing bodies, and perhaps clerks, in terms of inspection. I also think that pressure will be brought to enhance governor training.

I wish I had a crystal ball to see what the future will bring for governors but the best I can suggest is that governors, and clerks, should make sure they watch and listen and in the tradition of the Boy Scout movement, 'Be Prepared'.

S.G. What advice would you give to someone who is about to take up duties as a clerk, particularly if they are not a local authority official or have limited knowledge of the education world and school organization?

S.C. Don't fear it embrace it!

I have learned so much about education in this role. Education doesn't just happen. It is planned, there are experiments, there are failures, there are successes, and I've witnessed them all. Be brave. When you need your voice to be heard, speak up.

I found right from the start in this job that everyone wants to help but the best advice I can give to a new clerk is to visit the school and meet the Headteacher. Ask for the critical documents, the last inspection report, the School Improvement Plan, access to the All Wales Data Sets (or at least a summary), copies of previous minutes. Ask about the issues that are affecting the school and the actions that have been taken to address them. This will give you a real feeling for what the school and its governors are about.

As far as understanding general changes in education are concerned, I'm lucky. At work, I sit next to the School Improvement Team and I can bombard them with queries. But I must remind clerks who don't have that luxury that they are only a phone call or e-mail away. My experience is that everyone works to support schools and anything that smoothes the path to good management is welcomed.

Finally, every Local Authority has someone whose role includes governor support. They are fonts of knowledge and can always help clerks who feel beleaguered or just need encouragement or advice. Call them and find out.



LATEST NEWS



“TEACHING MAKES A DIFFERENCE/RAISING STANDARDS”

Minister for Children, Education & Lifelong Learning, Leighton Andrews AM, made two keynote speeches recently indicating that it was an extremely challenging time for education in Wales. Although the education system in Wales has introduced distinct education initiatives such as Flying Start, the Foundation Phase, the Welsh BaccaLaureate and 14-19 Learning Pathways, the recent PISA report results showed that the Welsh school system is under-performing for all ability levels. The Minister stated that “the education system in Wales is not delivering the outcomes our young people need or deserve”.*

The role of the governing body is crucial to school improvement and raising school standards. The Minister asked the following questions during his speech:

- To what extent are governors really engaged across Wales in driving up performance?
- To what extent are governors dependent on the headteacher for their information?
- How many headteachers are sharing the family of schools data with their governors?
- How is that being built in to school development plans?
- To what extent are Local Authorities empowering governors to understand and use data?
- Is the current system for headteacher review adequate?
- Is there effective alignment between governors’ appraisal and real improvements in performance?
- Do we need to align headteacher performance management with the local authority improvement role?

The Minister also outlined a 20-point plan to address the situation, some of which are noted below:

- A national system for the grading of schools
- Introduction of a national reading test
- New powers for Local Authorities to federate governing bodies, operating under single headteachers
- Statutory training for governors and effective clerking
- A school will not pass an Estyn inspection unless it can demonstrate that its governing body has discussed the family of schools data and other relevant performance data and has set in place actions to improve its position. (Further information will be issued on this in due course)
- Change to performance management provisions for headteacher performance management and teacher performance management.

*Source – article in Western Mail (Feb 2011)

The speech can be accessed from

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/allsectorpolicies/ourevents/teachingmakesadifference/?lang=en>

AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING CLERKS TO GOVERNING BODIES

WINNER - NERYS WILLIAMS, YSGOL DYFFRYN OGWEN, GWYNEDD

The winner of this year’s Outstanding Clerk to Governing Body Award 2011 was announced by the Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning, Leighton Andrews AM, at Governors Wales’ conference for governors and clerks “Making a Difference” held on 10th March 2011.

The runners-up were: Alison Lincoln, Ysgol Y Dderwen, Carmarthenshire
Ann Jones, Ysgol Gyfun Pantycelyn, Carmarthenshire

Llywodraethwyr Cymru Governors Wales
GOVERNORS HELPLINE

0845 6020100 is the helpline for governors of schools in Wales.

Operated by Governors Wales the helpline will provide advice on a range of issues to governors in all parts of Wales.



PUBLICATIONS

HANDBOOK UPDATES

The latest update for the “Handbook for School Governors in Wales” on “**Inspections**” (Part 4, Section 8) is included in this edition of Cadwyn. The new inspection framework is in line with and complements the School Effectiveness Framework. Key aspects of the Common Inspection Framework include:

- HMI-lead inspections;
- shorter notice period (4 weeks);
- three key questions rather than seven; and
- stronger role for self-evaluation;
- more learner involvement;
- more use of peer inspectors (trained by Estyn);
- more accessible reporting.

The update is also available to download on the Governors Wales website <http://www.governorswales.org.uk/handbook/update/>

A revised version of the handbook, which includes all the updates to date, will be available on the Governors Wales’ website shortly.

GOVERNOR GUIDES

Governors Wales has recently published a governor guide on the “Role of the Chair”. This guide focuses on the responsibilities and work of the chair of the governing body. Much is also relevant to the role of the Vice-Chair who will undertake the role of the chair when the chair is unavailable or there is no chair ‘in post.’

The chair of the governing body (elected annually) plays a pivotal role in the effectiveness of the governing body. This governor guide provides an in depth look at this crucial role, whilst at the same time summarises the role of the governing body available to download on <http://www.governorswales.org.uk/publications/governor-guides/>

FUTURE PUBLICATIONS TO LOOK OUT FOR INCLUDE:

Governor Guide on:

- Governing Body Self-Evaluation – due out this term

RECENT EVENTS

The following conferences have recently been held:

- South Wales Regional Conference – Saturday 5th March 2011 - **Working in Partnership**
- Conference for Governors and Clerks - Thursday 10th March 2011 - **Making a Difference**

The reports of both conferences and presentations used on the day are available to download on www.governorswales.org.uk/publications/conference-reports/

MISCELLANEOUS

Governors Wales’ website is now accessible via the Schools’ Portal Wales. The portal has been designed to give schools and local authorities easy access to a range of useful sites and information from a single point of contact. <http://schoolportalwales.org.uk/>

8. SCHOOL INSPECTION

The summary below sets out the way Estyn will inspect schools for the next six-year inspection cycle from September 2010. **Detailed information and guidance about the inspection process can be found on http://www.estyn.gov.uk/InspectionGuidance_2010.asp**

The governing body has a very important role in making sure that the school provides a good quality education for its pupils. It shares this responsibility with the headteacher, staff and the Local Authority. The School Development Plan/School Improvement Plan and the school's self evaluation report will help the governing body make judgements about the progress the school is making.

The Welsh Assembly Government is concerned about the standards and quality of education in individual schools as well as across the whole education service. Because of this, it is important that when judgements are made about the quality of and provision of education in different schools, there is a consistent approach being applied to those judgments and the same criteria is used. To meet these requirements, the Estyn Common Inspection Framework provides a systematic approach to inspections with all schools being inspected within a six-year cycle.

Under Section 28 of the Education Act 2005 and related regulations, from September 2010 all schools will be inspected at least once every six years by Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales, known as Estyn.

Inspections are conducted by a team of inspectors, led by a Reporting Inspector with other team members, all drawn from HMI or Additional Inspectors (Additional Inspectors may be on secondment or contract to the Inspectorate). Each team will also have a Peer Inspector (i.e. a member of staff from another school) and a Lay Inspector (who has not been involved in providing or managing school education, other than in a voluntary capacity). The inspection team members must have satisfactorily completed a training and evaluation course organised and approved by Estyn. The inspection team should not have any connection with the school as this may cast reasonable doubt on their ability to inspect and report impartially. In addition to the above, the school that is being inspected will be invited to select a 'nominee' (a member of the school's senior staff) to work with the inspection team. The nominee will provide an important link between the school and the inspection team.

PURPOSE OF INSPECTION:

The school inspection will cover all aspects of a school's provision, apart from denominational education and the content of collective worship in voluntary schools. These schools are inspected separately under section 50 of the Education Act 2005 for collective and religious worship.

The current inspection arrangements were introduced in order to:

- provide a means of identifying strengths and weaknesses to help improve standards and quality;
- provide an independent evaluation;
- identify and promote good practice and strive for excellence; and
- keep the Welsh Assembly Government and public informed (see list below).

Schools will receive four weeks' notice of the inspection, and will be required to submit the following information:

- key background information about the school;
- a copy of the school's most recent self-evaluation report and Improvement Plan;
- Details of:
 - (i) the school's timetable for the period of the inspection and,
 - (ii) staff members and responsibilities.

During the inspection, three Key Questions will be asked about the school, as noted in the Common Inspection Framework:

1. How good are outcomes?
Quality indicators:
 - 1.1 Standards
 - 1.2 Wellbeing
2. How good is provision?
Quality indicators:
 - 2.1 Learning experiences
 - 2.2 Teaching
 - 2.3 Care, support and guidance
 - 2.4 Learning environment
3. How good are leadership and management?
Quality indicators:
 - 3.1 Leadership
 - 3.2 Improving quality
 - 3.3 Partnership working
 - 3.4 Resource management

Each of the quality indicators above is supported by a number of different aspects.

Self-Evaluation Report

Self-evaluation is at the heart of the inspection process. A self-evaluation report will form the starting point of the inspection, highlighting strengths and shortcomings and areas for development. As a governor, it is crucial, therefore, that you have a clear idea of what is happening within your school. Does your governing body fulfil its strategic role? Do you act as a “critical friend” of the school by asking questions about all aspects of its life and work? Do you ask those key, but often simple questions – Why? How? Where? When? Do you monitor and evaluate performance and standards? Do you play an active part in producing and reviewing the School Development/Improvement Plan? Does the governing body have a clear vision for the school for the next five years?

See “A self-evaluation manual for primary and secondary schools 2010” on [http://www.estyn.gov.uk/publications/FINAL-selfevaluation%20\[Primary\]_aw.pdf](http://www.estyn.gov.uk/publications/FINAL-selfevaluation%20[Primary]_aw.pdf)
[http://www.estyn.gov.uk/publications/FINAL-selfevaluation%20\[Secondary\]_aw.pdf](http://www.estyn.gov.uk/publications/FINAL-selfevaluation%20[Secondary]_aw.pdf)

Before the inspection

The inspectorate will arrange to obtain a briefing on the school from the local authority. The reporting inspector will also complete a pre-inspection commentary (PIC). This will include hypotheses based on the school’s self-evaluation report and other information that inspectors will use to direct lines of enquiry during the inspection. The PIC will be sent to the nominee before the on-site part of the inspection.

The governing body, along with the headteacher and senior management team of the school must be responsible for ensuring that:

- (i) parents/carers and stakeholders are informed of the date of the inspection;
- (ii) a meeting is arranged between the Reporting Inspector and parents/carers of pupils of the school;
- (iii) questionnaires are sent (on behalf of Estyn) to parents/carers and a sample of pupils. The results of these surveys will form part of the pre-inspection evidence;
- (iv) the various documentation requested is sent to the inspection team;
- (v) the headteacher, members of staff, pupils and school nominee are supported in preparing for the inspection; and
- (vi) a meeting is arranged with the chair of governors and inspectors during the inspection period.

During the inspection:

The inspection team will:

- observe lessons;
- listen to learners;
- hold interviews and discussions with pupils and staff; and
- scrutinise pupils' work, school documents and other relevant evidence;

The inspection team will also consider whether the school needs any follow-up activity, i.e:

- (1) good practice case study;
- (2) Local Authority monitoring;
- (3) Estyn monitoring;
- (4) significant improvement; or
- (5) special measures.

After the inspection:

- (i) The inspection team will evaluate the provision and make two overall summary judgments, linked to the three key questions and 10 quality indicators, which in turn are based on a 4-point scale – excellent, good, adequate and unsatisfactory. The summary judgements will include an overall judgment on the school's current performance and on the school's prospects for improvement;
- (ii) The Reporting Inspector will provide oral feedback, on the inspection findings at the end of the inspection process to leaders and managers, including a governor representative – this will usually be the chair of governors. A representative from the LA should be invited to attend the meeting. This will convey the main judgements and the reasons for them;
- (iii) The school will have five working days to consider a draft response to check for factual accuracies;
- (iv) The Reporting Inspector must produce the inspection report within the statutory timescales after the end of the inspection. Copies of the report will be provided free of charge to parents;
- (v) On publication of the report, the governing body must produce an Action Plan within 45 working days. The action plan must show what will be done in response to the inspection recommendations. The governing body must ensure that the recommendations from the report are built into the School Improvement Plan and are monitored and evaluated. Reports on progress made by the school should be communicated in the governors' annual report to parents.