

“ Dear Governor,

Welcome to this latest edition of the Trust's newsletter for governors.

May I begin by thanking those Chairs and Vice chairs who attended the recent Chairs' Forum for their contributions to what was a constructive and healthy discussion about the performance of their respective schools. It was heartening to be part of an event where the willingness to share and learn from each other was so evident. I am looking forward to our next meeting where we will be considering a range of operational governance matters, including revisions to the Trust's scheme of delegation to ensure it is fully aligned with the powers and responsibilities delegated to LGBs.

I am pleased to see this edition also includes a reminder of the kind of questions LGBs should be asking of themselves when reviewing their own effectiveness. Much of this information is readily available to all governors via the trust website www.brookewestontrust.org, so please do ensure you log on to see what is there.

Since the last newsletter there have been several very positive news stories about our schools. Of particular note was the Secretary of State's visit to Corby Technical School, which she described as 'inspirational'. The Trust is also consulting on whether or not to bid for monies to open a second (special) free school in Corby adjacent to Beanfield Primary Academy and if the feedback is positive we will try to pursue this idea after the election period.

Finally, I am sure all governors would wish to join with me in wishing Sarah Mills the very best of luck as she leaves us to take up a new post as Service Manager (Access and Organisation) for Warwickshire County Council. Sarah has been a great asset to the Trust and we are sad to see her go, but this is an excellent career opportunity and she leaves with our very best wishes for the future. ”

Dr Andrew Campbell
Brooke Weston Trust



Governors meet with staff to explain their strategy

Governors from Brooke Weston Academy's LGB met with staff to give them a deeper understanding of their work. The informal visit took place in February and staff were able to ask governors about various issues and learn more about their strategy. The discussions took place in the restaurant and many members of teaching and non teaching staff went along.

Vice Principal Mr Willimott said: "The meeting was held in response to a recent survey where staff indicated that they wanted to know more about the role of the governors and ask more about issues important to them. We are very grateful that John Hill, Marcus Learoyd, Leyton Smith and Phil Harris-Bridge found the time to come along, meet the staff and answer their queries. It was a very valuable experience."

Phil Harris-Bridge, who is Chair of Governors at Brooke Weston Academy, said: "Feedback from the recent BWA Staff Opinion Survey, reviewed by the governors meeting in late January, indicated that governors need to do more to help staff to understand the role of governance and the governing body in the life of the Academy. This meeting was a good opportunity for the governors to also begin to build this understanding for members of staff who came along. Both the governors and staff who met that evening enjoyed the opportunity to exchange views, concerns and



information in a more relaxed environment and we hope to be able to run more of these types of event."

The process of governors meeting with staff was initiated by Mr Harris-Bridge and BWA Principal Trish Stringer in 2013.

Mr Harris-Bridge said: "The staff at the Academy – teaching and non-teaching – are not only a key stakeholder group but are very much THE team of people that deliver the excellent teaching and learning experience for our students that creates the "outstanding" Brooke Weston Academy. Governors meeting with staff regularly to share issues, risks and opportunities is an essential part of the two-way communication flow that governors need to be actively involved in.

"During a previous Governors Panel event in the middle of 2014, staff raised a number of concerns that the governors addressed in the following months. These included changing the BWA admissions policy (to provide a priority for the children of staff in the year 7 admissions process) and also some aspects of the way the LINK governors activity works, with governors coming into school to understand the daily life of the Academy."

Corby Business Academy's Local Governing Body has recently been joined by Cllr Matt Golby



"I have been the Cabinet member for Learning Skills and Education at Northamptonshire County Council since May, 2014. This is a role I thoroughly enjoy. I am lucky enough to regularly visit all types of schools and colleges throughout Northamptonshire and am able to see first-hand some of the amazing teaching that

happens in our county. I also get to meet many of our remarkable young people and am passionate to do all I can to make sure every child in Northamptonshire has the opportunity to excel, irrespective of their ability, their social circumstances or ethnicity.

"Corby Business Academy was one of the very first visits I made in my new role and it made a lasting impression on me. I was hugely impressed with the thinking behind the design and facilities at CBA, and also the passion and enthusiasm I saw in everyone involved there to make every child's learning experience while they study at CBA to be the very best it can be. When I was asked to consider becoming a governor, it was a very easy decision to make. I look forward to providing challenge to the leadership team at CBA and am particularly interested in ensuring the very best outcomes for every child: the good use of pupil premium and issues around safeguarding.

I am lucky enough to have a wonderful young family. I will apply the aspirations I have for the education of my children to all of the children at Corby Business Academy."



National Governance News

The All Party Parliamentary Group for Education Governance and Leadership in March 2015 published a new set of 21 questions designed to help ensure that governance structures in Multi-academy Trusts (MATs) are fit for purpose.

Chair of the Group Neil Carmichael MP said: "These questions address really important issues. MAT board effectiveness is important, it's important that we get the structures right and it's important that we get executive leadership right. For that to happen we have to ask the right questions."

Lord Nash, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools, said: "High quality governance is vital to the success of schools and the quality of education they provide to their pupils. Given the number of schools they oversee, the boards of Multi-academy Trusts have a particularly significant role and we must do everything we can to help them do it well. I am therefore delighted to see the development of a tool that aims to help MAT boards reflect on and improve their performance. The 20 questions for governing bodies have been hugely popular and I hope that these questions for MATs deliver similar impact."

Emma Knights, Chief Executive of the National Governors' Association said: "With over half of academies now in a Multi-academy Trust, it's essential that governors and trustees can be confident that their structure supports better outcomes for children and young people. MATs tend to have multiple layers of governance but their respective roles have not always been well defined. The Twenty-one Questions for MAT Boards are broad and challenging; they should provoke reflection and change for the better."

The 21 questions will be published in the next issue of this publication.

Framework for Governance

In January the National Governors Association and the Wellcome Trust launched the Framework for Governance.

The framework can be viewed and downloaded from the governors section of the BWT website (www.brookewestontrust.org)

20 questions every Governing Board should ask itself

The National Governors Association has issued this checklist of how Governing Bodies can give themselves an internal assessment. This is something the Trust endorses and thinks would be a good exercise for all of our LGBS to carry out.

Governing board effectiveness

Right skills: Do we have the right skills on the governing board?

- 1 Have we completed a skills audit which informs the governor specification we use as the basis of governor appointment and interview?

Effectiveness

Are we as effective as we could be?

- 2 How well do we understand our roles and responsibilities, including what it means to be strategic?
- 3 Do we have a professional clerk who provides legal advice and oversees the governing board's induction and development needs?
- 4 Is the size, composition and committee structure of our governing board conducive to effective working?
- 5 How do we make use of good practice from across the country?

Role of the Chair

Does our Chair show strong and effective leadership?

- 6 Do we carry out a regular 360° review of the chair's performance and elect the chair each year?
- 7 Do we engage in good succession planning so that no governor serves for longer than two terms of office and the chair is replaced at least every six years?
- 8 Does the chair carry out an annual review of each governor's contribution to the board's performance?

Vision, ethos and strategy

Strategy: Does the school have a clear vision and strategic priorities?

- 9 Does our vision look forward three to five years, and does it include what the children who have left the school will have achieved?
- 10 Have we agreed a strategy with priorities for achieving our vision with key performance indicators against which we can regularly monitor and review the strategy?
- 11 How effectively does our strategic planning cycle drive the governing board's activities and agenda setting?

Engagement:

Are we properly engaged with our school community, the wider school sector and the outside world?

- 12 How well do we listen to, understand and respond to our pupils, parents and staff?
- 13 How do we make regular reports on the work of the governing board to our parents and local community?
- 14 What benefit does the school draw from collaboration with other schools and other sectors, locally and nationally?

Effective accountability

Accountability of the executive: Do we hold the school leaders to account?

- 15 How well do we understand the school's performance data (including in-year progress tracking data) so we can properly hold school leaders to account?
- 16 Do governors regularly visit the school to get to know it and monitor the implementation of the school strategy?
- 17 How well does our policy review schedule work and how do we ensure compliance?
- 18 Do we know how effective performance management of all staff is within the school?
- 19 Are our financial management systems robust so we can ensure best value for money?

Impact

Are we having an impact on outcomes for pupils?

- 20 How much has the school improved over the last three years, and what has the governing board's contribution been to this?



NEWS FROM ACROSS THE BROOKE WESTON TRUST AND OUR SCHOOLS

Trust submits bids to Department for Education

The Trust received positive responses in two consultations exercises regarding Kettering Science Academy and Corby Technical School.

The proposals concerned increasing the size of Corby Technical School and changing current arrangements

to make the primary and secondary schools at KSA stand alone.

Northamptonshire County Council wrote a letter of support for the CTS expansion and the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Secretary of State were also supportive of the proposals.

Both bids have now been submitted to the DfE for consideration. Once the Trust has more information this will be shared with all staff, governors and stakeholders and formal plans will be drawn up.



BWT's Matt Isherwood (Centre) with TV presenter George Clarke (left) and Paul Baxter from Nicholas Hare Architects. Image from the Civic Trust Awards & Corporate Photography

Civic Trust Award for KSA

Kettering Science Academy has been commended in a prestigious national built environment awards scheme.

The £26m school, which opened in 2011, was designed by Nicholas Hare Architects who put the building up for the Civic Trust Award.

Director of Estates for BWT Matt Isherwood went along to the awards ceremony at Shakespeare's Globe in London on March 6th to collect the award. He said: "The Trust is delighted to receive the commendation in

recognition for the design of Kettering Science Academy. It is a wonderful building that provides an outstanding learning environment for the community it serves. The project was a genuine team effort which would not have been possible without the support from Northamptonshire County Council, the technical advisors (Mott MacDonald), the contractor (Willmott Dixon) but most importantly the imagination and innovation brought by Paul and his team from Nicholas Hare Architects."

The Civic Trust Awards scheme was established in 1959 to recognise the very best in architecture, design, planning, landscape and public art.

Education Secretary hails Corby Technical School as Inspirational

Corby Technical School impressed Nicky Morgan when she made a visit in February. Students gave the minister an insight into everyday school life at the pioneering school, as she witnessed a number of lessons and talked to them about their passion for technical subjects.

Representatives from one of the school's business links, multinational engineering firm Cummins, also spoke to the Education Secretary about its work with students on a Lego engine.

Mrs Morgan, who at the start of her visit watched an assembly about students work with virtual reality devices, said: "I think that



The Education Secretary speaking with the Trust's CEO Andrew Campbell

Corby Technical School is fantastic. I have been very clear since I became Education Secretary of the need for schools to form strong links with the business community so that their young people develop the skills needs to succeed in working life.

"It is fantastic to see a free school such as Corby Technical School doing this. The fact it is oversubscribed shows what a good job it is doing and how inspirational it is."

Brooke Weston Trust consults on plans to open a Special Free School

The Trust is consulting on whether it should bid to the DfE for funds to open a special free school in Corby.

CEO Andrew Campbell said: "The Local Authority has identified a need for a new Special Free School so that students' complex learning needs are appropriately addressed. This is an excellent opportunity to provide more investment in special education, which will further improve opportunities for children and young people with SEN across Corby and the surrounding area. If the school received government backing and went ahead as part of the Brooke Weston Trust we would want it to work closely with Beanfield Primary Academy, the excellent provision at Corby Business Academy and other local special needs providers."

The consultation is about whether there is local support for and sufficient student demand for such a school. If the result of the consultation is positive the Trust will submit a formal bid to the Department for Education for funding. If this was successful the new school (which would be called Red Kite Academy) would probably open in September 2017. The initial idea is to cater for pupils from Reception to Year 7. The school would then grow by one year group each year until reaching capacity at Year 13.

The school will be free to attend and would cater for students with Education, Health and Care Plans and Statements for: Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD); Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD); Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) and Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) with additional complex needs. If opened, the school would educate pupils aged from 3 to 18 and would be located in the Beanfield area of Corby adjacent to the Beanfield Primary Academy.

To take part in the consultation visit the www.brookewestontrust.org and go to the information and then consultation page.

GOVERNING BODY MEETING DATES 2014 -2015

Please note that these dates may be subject to change, so keep an eye on the governors area of the website.

BWA	CTS	CBA	KSA	TCA	Peckover	Oakley Vale	Gretton	Beanfield	Chairs Forum (TBC)
Tuesday 5th May (4pm)	Thursday 28th May 4pm	Thursday 16th April, 4pm			Tuesday 21st April 5.30pm	Wednesday 29th April, 5.30pm			Friday 8th May
		Thursday 25th June, 4pm	Thursday 2nd July 4pm	Thursday 30th June, 6pm	Tuesday 16th June 5.30pm	Wednesday 10th June, 5.30pm	Monday 13th July 4.30pm	Monday 22nd June, 6pm	21st September

TRAINING UPDATE

We have a programme of continued training for our governors and the following sessions are planned:

Governor Induction Training – for new governors

Monday 20th April, 5-6pm
Corby Technical School

Exclusions Training – for all governors

Wednesday 6th May, 6-7.30pm,
Brooke Weston Academy

Further details will be sent to all governors in due course and for more details email atrott@brookewestontrust.org



FAREWELL TO SARAH MILLS

Many of you will know Sarah Mills, the Trust's Operations and Compliance Manager. Sarah, who is also a clerk to the governors is leaving to take up a new post as Service Manager (Access and Organisation) for Warwickshire County Council.

CEO Andrew Campbell said: "Sarah has been a great asset to the Trust and we are sad to see her go, but this is an excellent career opportunity and she leaves with our very best wishes for the future."

Please contact Anna Trott for any queries on atrott@brookeweston.org.



USE THE DEDICATED GOVERNORS SECTION OF THE WEBSITE FOR UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION

The Governors section of the BWT website (www.brookewestontrust.org) is a one-stop-shop for all the information that is relevant to members of our LGBS. It is regularly updated with relevant national and local news and policies and also all minutes of meetings are posted there.