



BARNSELY
GOVERNORS
ASSOCIATION

Chair's Report to the Annual General Meeting 2021

The BGA has been active in the Borough since Academic Year 2010-2011. We remain committed to supporting and improving governance in Barnsley schools.

We are proud to work for and with school governors in Barnsley. We are conscious of the access this gives us to the other partners within the Borough and we look to spread the message of good governance amongst those partner organisations. Ultimately, we are committed as a group to improving governance to improve the offering at each school in the Borough, whatever its status and however it is deemed to be performing. It is also about spreading the word about the importance of effective oversight and good governance amongst all organisations working within the education sector.

This has been a trying 12 months for all. Each of us has had to struggle with the current public health crisis and managing the risks this creates. We have had to oversee matters such as curriculum catch up and school improvement against the background of a new OFSTED assessment framework with a focus on a wider enriched curriculum.

Just like school leaders and staff, there is no respite, and we cannot lose sight of the significance of these changes. We have new skills to learn and new questions to ask. Whilst recognising and sympathising with the pressures on senior leaders we have a responsibility to continue to learn about our schools and to raise challenge when necessary.

Our focus remains the quality of the education offer across the Borough for all children and young people and to continue to push for improvement in the life chances of our children and young people by supporting the creation of a generation of confident and positive learners.

The organisation has had to adapt and learn. We have, like many others moved to greater reliance upon and more effective use of new technologies. We have migrated online to conduct business. It has its flaws, but it has helped us to function as normally as possible. Both forums and training have been offered as online options and the take up has been good. It could of course be better, and we look to hear from you in that respect. We are currently mapping out the offer for 2021-2022.

It is clear that people's attitude and approach to professional training and networking is changing, influenced no doubt in part by changing governance structures but also by the lessons learned through this pandemic era.

We continue to ensure that our training is delivered by people with experience of working as governors to ensure that the offer is the correct one, on point and focused on the identified needs of current governors. We continue to ensure that the training offered is ve is practical, on point and responsive.

To this end we have continued over the past year to sponsor and organise conferences and discussion forums for governors to provide a means of discussing current issues affecting governors. Peer to peer exchange is an effective tool for wider learning and we feel that this offers opportunity to look in depth and critically at the day-to-day challenges facing governors.

We remain committed to partnership working but equally we want that relationship to yield benefits and wider opportunities. Members of the BGA Executive Committee have continued to promote and represent the views of governors at the Schools Forum and the Barnsley Alliance Board. This work will continue for as long as you as individual members want to see this happening and we encourage your participation by talking to us about your current concerns.

We continue to provide information and articles on our website and regular updates in our newsletters which are sent to any governor who provides us with an email address. Please feel free to provide us with contact details so that you can be reached.

We are also happy to support governing bodies by answering questions and advising on individual issues facing a governing body, especially matters concerning improving the effectiveness of governance.

I would like to encourage those present here tonight to consider what they as individuals might offer to the wider work of the Association and to perhaps volunteer for appointment to the Executive Committee. You would be most welcome.

As you would expect at this point, I want to thank my colleagues on the Executive Committee who work so hard because of their wish to see better educational attainment and achievement in Barnsley. Thank you one and all. I would also like to express my personal thanks for the support offered to me by these colleagues in my role of Chair of the Association.

I would also like to say thank you to each of you for your commitment to the role of governor and the work you do in your individual schools.

Before moving on, I would like to record the sad loss of a long serving colleague Pat Doyle who passed away earlier this year. He was committed to the work of the Association and remained committed to his local governance role up to the point he fell ill and regrettably passed away. I would on behalf of the Association like to offer our thanks for his commitment and support and also place on record our deepest sympathies to his family for their sad loss.

I feel proud in the trust placed in me over the last three years. I remain committed to seeing continued improvement within the Association but more importantly the standard of governance within all Barnsley schools. It is a role often overlooked but it can make such a difference. We all have an interest in the future outcomes for children in the Borough and we should remember that an effective voice promoting an agenda of continuing improvement can make a significant change in aspiration and outcomes.

This Association is anxious to provide the framework for future discussion and training to promote improvement and would encourage everyone to let us know what we can do to facilitate this.

Stephen Gallagher
October 2021