

News story: Education Secretary issues call to arms for school governors

This comes as Damian Hinds has joined with the Institute of Directors to call on more than 30,000 leading British businesses to encourage their employees to lend their expertise and commitment in the running of schools and colleges.

There are around 250,000 experienced governors and trustees across the country – including many parents – selflessly providing their time, energy, and guidance to support schools to provide the very best education for children.

The Education Secretary will announce that the budget for training and support for this “army of volunteers” will be doubled to £6 million up to 2021 to ensure more school leaders have access to popular training courses that build on their existing skills and will help raise education standards even further.

He will also set out plans to bear down on Academy trusts that pay excessive salaries and hand out lucrative contracts to family and friends in a clampdown to make them more accountable for the money they spend. These announcements will build on the clear rules already in place to provide transparency over academy finances. The measures include:

- a requirement for academy accounts to detail staff earning over £100,000 and the percentage of teaching time those individuals undertake; and
- a requirement, from April, for all related party transactions to be declared to the Education and Skills Funding Agency and for academy trusts to seek approval for any transaction over £20,000.

Thanks to the hard work of teachers and the government’s reforms, there are now 1.9 million more children in good or outstanding schools than in 2010. Today’s commitments will raise the bar even further, strengthening the expertise within the systems that govern our schools and colleges.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds is expected to say:

How would we run our schools without this army of volunteers? I want to do everything I can to help boost governor recruitment and retention. Because, quite simply, we need more great people.

So today I’m issuing a call to arms...appealing to people up and down the country to take on this vital role – to play their part in helping the next generation to thrive.

I want to urge people from different backgrounds, different professions, to come forward – offer up your time, your energy, your skills, your expertise... I’m also making an appeal to the

nation's employers today.

Because of course to become a governor, people with full-time jobs will need their employer's support. I believe businesses can make a contribution to society here – and it's not just schools either. Governors of Further Education colleges are key to providing the skills and training businesses need, and will play a pivotal role delivering our new T Level qualifications.

That's why I'm writing to the 30,000 members of the Institute of Directors, urging them to encourage employees to take on this role, and give them the time it needs.

Stephen Martin, Director General of the Institute of Directors, said:

Good governance doesn't just apply to business, it is also crucial to the way we run our schools. Indeed many of the skills acquired in corporate directorship roles are directly transferable to the education sector. IoD members know this first-hand and many are already actively involved with the schools system, but there are so many more company directors who could be using their expertise and experience for the benefit of their local communities.

That's why the Institute of Directors and the Department for Education are today issuing a call to business leaders and their employees to become a school governor or academy trustees. This will help drive up standards and increase opportunities for our young people, and ultimately help tackle the skills gap and boost business productivity.

The role of a governor or trustee can involve developing a school strategy, making sure budgets are properly managed and holding headteachers to account for a school's performance.

These are important and respected roles in local communities and, according to the Institute of Directors, becoming a governor or academy trustee gives businesses first-hand involvement in their local community and provides valuable skills for employees. The Institute of Directors and some of Britain's leading businesses like Rolls Royce and Lloyds Banking Group already recognise the leadership development benefits that the role brings to their employees.

Many of Britain's leading businesses are represented on academy boards through the government-funded Academy Ambassadors scheme, which has introduced more than 950 business professionals from companies such as BT, HSBC, Northern Powergrid, PwC and Slaughter & May to governing board roles since its launch in 2013.

The joint letter from the Secretary of State and the Institute of Directors has been sent to IoD members and will look to build on these existing

relationships between schools and businesses.

To bear down on pay, in recent months Academies Minister Lord Agnew has been working with Eileen Milner, CEO of the Education and Skills Funding Agency, to challenge 117 academy trusts across the country paying a salary of more than £150,000 to ensure they are clear that pay must be justifiable and based on a transparent process.

Following a series of correspondence and meetings with these trusts, so far 18 have confirmed they no longer pay a salary over £150,000, and many more have indicated they will work to revise high salaries and prevent unjustified salary inflation in the future.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds will continue:

I want to make sure that every pound of public money for our schools is used in the best possible way for the good of our children and society. That means taking a tough approach...

This includes a new more robust process to manage related party transactions made by academy trusts. I think pretty much everyone would agree that a situation where board members could hand out unjustified contracts to companies that they or their friends and business associates have an interest in is not okay...

We also want to be clear about our expectations on high pay – which applies to all schools not just academies. There is no doubt that our school system has many great leaders – and for large and complex organisations, pay must reflect the scale of the task.

However, pay needs to be proportionate – and pay rises for non-teaching staff should not exceed that awarded to teaching staff. And where salaries aren't justifiable – we will say so.

These announcements come as the NGA launches its campaign 'Everyone on Board' to increase the diversity on school boards, with a particular focus on younger and BAME governors who are currently under-represented.

Emma Knights OBE, Chief Executive of the NGA said:

The call by the Secretary of State and Institute of Directors for employers to support their employees to govern schools is most welcome. Governing boards need skilled volunteers and a good mixture of perspectives and experience around the table in order to effectively support and challenge school leaders, making decisions in the interest of all pupils.

Being a school governor or trustee is very rewarding; while the pupils in our school will benefit from the time and expertise that committed volunteers can offer, employees will also learn and

develop.