

Introduction

The past academic year has been a 'year like no other' for governors as well as teachers, support staff, parents, carers and children. The RGA has had to adapt its offering; moving to 'Teams' rather than 'in person' events, but our purpose and focus has remained constant. We will, as with everyone else involved in education, take what we can from the experience gained and continue to work with the Local Authority, BFFC, and all those involved in governance at schools in the Reading area to assist with the education landscape.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues on the RGA board for the time and expertise they give. In particular I want to recognise and thank Richard Stainthorp who is standing down as Treasurer at this AGM.

Key Activities from 2020-21

Conduit to Local Authority

Collaboration and Representation. The RGA board has continued to build on our solid professional relationship with Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC) providing a good forum for mutual feedback and message reinforcement.

We still work closely with Sarah Shortt at Governor Services to plan complementary events which dovetail in with those that Governor Services provide.

Going forward, we have agreed to hold meetings with Prof. Dr. Kate Reynolds at BFfC every Autumn, Spring and Summer. This will give RGA an opportunity to raise strategic issues at the highest level on behalf of our members.

Communication

Website. We have continued to develop the content on our website (www.therga.org.uk). The site is a useful, 'go to' resource for governors providing, amongst other things:

- A summary of the latest news [as it applies to Reading](#)
- Notification of events
- The ability to book places on events in a simple and user friendly way
- Access to presentations from previous events
- Links to useful resources
- The ability to ask a question
- Access to advice or help

Expertise

Over the past year, RGA board members have assisted school boards in a number of ways to improve governance. This activity has included researching and modelling best practice in all aspects of governance, and sharing combined governor experiences to support colleagues with similar challenges.

The RGA can put governing boards in touch with experienced governors if you need help, or if you can offer it. This is an area we would like to develop further so please do share your successes with us for the benefit of everyone.

Training & Events

During this difficult year we have continued to deliver successful events online and have even increased our offering with the introduction of a new network for finance governors.

Next year we will continue the Chairs, Safeguarding and Finance Networks.

We will re-brand the Disadvantaged Network as the Inclusion Network. This is to take into account that this area really encompasses much more than just PP or SEND issues, but also any significant groups that face challenges in education, and all children from a mental health and wellbeing perspective.

Next year we will start two new forums. The first is the Clerks forum, which will be a platform for clerks to get together (away from governors!) and will be hosted by Hazel Archer, the RGA clerk. The second is the New Governors forum, aimed at governors in their first two years of the role, to support their development and create relationships with peers. This will be hosted by local leaders of governance, including RGA board members. These are badged as forums, rather than networks, as they are intended to be networking opportunities, not formal training, and will not have set agendas.

It is important for CPD and for Ofsted that governors have access to support, training and development which makes RGA membership a vital resource. We will continue to provide electronic attendance certificates to all our attendees which can be easily forwarded to your clerks to assist the recording of your board's CPD.

Administration

Membership Administration. Membership currently extends to 40 schools (39 state and 1 independent). 24 Reading state schools are not members, but of these 17 are in academy trusts which in some instances don't even have local governing boards now. So membership remains at a healthy level, although the trend of multi-academy trusts opting out of collaborating with the larger Reading schools community is of concern. We will continue to approach these trusts, and local independent schools, as our aim is ultimately to support all Reading children in ensuring strong governance.

Contact Management. Our contact database holds details of governors, chairs, clerks and SBMs. We only use this database for administration and to notify you of news and events. We do NOT share your data with any other parties. At the start of the new academic year we will be contacting your schools to check these details are up to date. If you are asked, please do give permission to let the school confirm your details with us. When your governors or clerks change, please let us know as that saves time and ensures only those who wish to be kept informed will receive communications from the RGA.

Officers' meetings. The RGA board has continued to meet online every few weeks to discuss priorities, develop our offering and, of course, to plan all the events.

We are always looking for new governors to help out, so please contact admin@therga.org.uk if you are interested in becoming a board member.

Key Priorities for 2021-22

Over the next year our key priorities will be to:

- Seek to work more closely with the Local Authority at a strategic level, to achieve the common goal of every school in Reading being Good or better.
- Further develop the RGA website such that it provides up to date and relevant information on a more frequent basis. Our aim is still for the RGA website to become the go to place for governors

in Reading. We will be monitoring the traffic to our site, and also putting the 'resources' webpage behind a paywall.

- Deliver the growing number of governor networks and forums in a blended offer of face to face and online such that we can support each other to improve the quality of education in Reading, and enjoy ourselves while doing so.
- Grow our networks with other organisations in order to attract more high-profile speakers and alternative voices to conferences and networks.

Strategically, over the longer term, our aspirations are also to:

- Work with governor recruitment organisations such as the NGA, to encourage greater interest and uptake from those considering a future in governance, showcasing Reading schools as a first choice.
- Work with a local teaching school alliance to develop and roll out an accredited 'Local Leader of Governance' scheme for Reading, to fill the gaps left by the suspension of the NLG programme.

We hope you have valued your membership of the Association this year, and are enthusiastic to renew your membership next year. We wish you a pleasant Summer break, and we will see you again in September, ready to navigate the upcoming challenges.

Richard Rolfe
Chair