



SASGB Chair's Report 2014/15

In preparing this report I found to my surprise that it is now the fifth such report I have prepared and looking at the landscape of schools and governance in the city across that period of time there have been many significant changes and developments. As I speak now the development of academies has grown to the extent that most secondary schools have now embraced that model and there is an increasing number of primary schools moving in that direction. SASGB position has not been to oppose or inhibit such developments, we have just been concerned that governors making such choices and decisions should do so with adequate information and given the ability to select the most appropriate route or partner for their school. It does sadden me to see however the Secretary of State feeling it necessary to place a 'duty to facilitate conversion' on governors as well as curtailing consultation in some circumstances. I am sure that in another five years we will have yet another different scene here and nationally with perhaps maintained schools a thing of the past.

It is in reacting to the changed circumstances that we hope SASGB have continued their work on behalf of all governors in the city to ensure our voice is heard. Conversion to academy status brings with it an even sharper awareness of the duties and responsibilities for trustees/governors but in schools of all types and sizes those issues are of increasing importance. We have shared the concern of the local authority that high quality governance in all our schools is a vital component of school leadership and we have supported initiatives such as NLGs and LLGs in making a contribution to that objective.

We have maintained regular contact and input in meetings of all shapes and sizes such as the Schools Forum, City Wide Learning Board, Governors Strategy Group to name just a few I remain concerned that governor input still depends on too small a group of individuals. We have tried to widen input through means such as the sector chairs groups but input has been limited and I would welcome any other suggestions as to how we cast our net more widely. We have agreed to move towards using a web presence for more effective communication which has meant we have not distributed a printed newsletter this year. The savings on that will enable us to have an independent web presence all being well by the start of the new school year and I hope it will also provide us with a more effective direct means of communication to our membership base rather than having to rely on the means provided by the City Council.

Despite the fragmentation of the governance models for schools in the city there has remained a strong commitment by governors, headteachers and the local authority to sustaining a moral commitment to the Sheffield Family of Schools and meeting the needs of all children within the city. It was this that led to the formation of the City Wide Learning Body. You will hopefully be aware of further developments on that front with the evolution of the CWLB into a possible

Schools Company model in the near future. The SASGB Executive has discussed and supported that evolution and have made an input into the considerations around the new model as well as ensuring that governors who will make the decision at a school level whether to be members or not, are briefed on the matter and will have access to the supporting information to help them make their decision. Having just attended all seven of the locality briefings I was impressed by the range of questions and views expressed and was pleasantly surprised that virtually all were largely positive especially in supporting the overall need for a city wide commitment to all our children.

With growing numbers of children against a background of continued financial constraint the next few years will be tougher and I think it will need some brave decisions on partnerships and new organisational models to ensure that we govern and manage our schools in an effective ways. Partnership working continues to be a necessity, research has proven it to be an essential and effective feature in making an impact on teaching and learning and thereby the performance of our schools. We need to emulate that in our approach to governance and create better ways of managing and governing to utilise the skills I believe is there in the large number of people who commit their time to being a school governor but we have some distance still to travel to ensure that this is shared and applied more widely.

Keith Crawshaw
Chair