

Frances Acton is one of three advisers at Governorline

More capital investment announced for education

In his pre-budget speech in December 2006, Chancellor Gordon Brown confirmed a £36 billion investment programme, over the next four years, in the refurbishment and rebuilding of England's schools and colleges. This will ensure, he said, that "all 21,000 schools are fit for the 21st century".

Capital investment in education will rise to £10.2 billion in 2010/11, including additional investment of £250 million, £750 million and £1,850 million over the years 2008/09 to 2010/11.

There will also be a £130 million increase in direct

payments to support personalised teaching and extended services, as well as a promise to increase the Bookstart scheme, which gives free books to primary children, and the Every Child a Reader programme. This provides special catch-up tuition to children falling behind at the age of six.

Direct payments to schools in England will rise to an average of £200 per pupil for primary schools and £225 per pupil for secondary schools.

For more info: www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/pre_budget_report

Consultation on three-year budgets

The Government is proposing some key changes to the way the funding arrangements work, ready for the move to three-year school budgets from April 2008. These will cover issues such as the Minimum Funding Guarantee, and how schools and local authorities are funded for deprivation. Consultation on these proposals will be launched in February, but ministers have already decided not to proceed with academic year budgets for schools, as schools must continue to account on a financial-year basis.

FOR MORE INFO: Look out in February for details of the consultation on the schoolfunding pages of TeacherNet at www.teachernet.gov.uk/schoolfunding

The new EU Lifelong Learning Programme

The EU will be launching its Lifelong Learning Programme from January 2007. This will give learners a host of opportunities to develop their skills by working together with their European peers.

The programme brings together four already existing programmes, including Comenius, which provides funding for schools across Europe to work together on projects either related to languages or another area of the curriculum. There are also



opportunities for pupils and staff to take part in exchanges and for teachers to develop their teaching and management skills.

FOR MORE INFO: www.lifelonglearningprogramme.org.uk

Words: Sara Grossman Picture: Rogan McDonald



Advice at your fingertips

You've got three new governors on your governing body who need guidance on what they should be doing, the school needs to dismiss a member of staff and you don't know where the school stands legally, and there is ongoing conflict between the chair of governors and the headteacher. Where do you turn?

Governorline is a free service for governors, providing advice and support. The Governorline team comprises three advisers – John Haines, Cliff Baldry and Frances Acton, who recently joined the team in June 2006. All three are experienced school governors, and can deal with most of the

questions thrown at them. "It's easy to advise other governors because I'm talking about what I know. A lot of the issues are the same, regardless of the school or the governor," says Frances, who has been a governor for 10 years, and chair for four. "Sometimes, it's about pointing them in the right direction; other times, people merely want someone to bounce ideas off and to explore the options. And if I don't know the answer, we have on hand teams of legal advisers, and health and safety experts. Governorline is good because it's objective and sympathetic, and can offer support."

Governorline receives around 8,000 calls per year, and 80-90 emails per month. Calls come mainly from the chair of governors, although new governors often ring, wanting advice on what they should be doing.

The most common calls received relate to the roles and responsibilities of governors and conflict issues, but

Governorline also receives calls in respect of employment legislation and health and safety. Below, Frances Acton answers a couple of common questions that Governorline receives:

I am a new parent governor. I've been told by the chair that I cannot bring parents' day-to-day issues to the governing body.

Day-to-day issues should be handled by the head and the staff. However, on the strategic issues where parents' views should be taken into account by the governing body, it would be

desirable for a parent governor to share parental views and to facilitate consultation with the parent body.

Our recent Key Stage test results are very disappointing and governors are asking what can be done to improve them. The head insists that everything is under control, and there is no need for any governor involvement. What should we do?

Governors are entitled to ask for any relevant performance data such as the school PANDA and RAISEONLINE report etc. They should then work with the leadership team to identify areas requiring improvement and to develop strategies to effect this improvement. The governing body should be involved in the ongoing monitoring of progress towards these identified outcomes, in conjunction with the leadership team, until the targets are met. **G**

FOR MORE INFO:

Visit www.governorline.info or call on 08000 722181