

Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP
Secretary of State
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

20 March 2024

Dear Secretary of State,

Almost quarter of a million citizens in England volunteer to govern our state schools and academy trusts. They give large amounts of time, thought and care to ensure that children and young people receive the education they need and they deserve. Oversight of our schools and trust is, we hope you agree, a significant role, not to be taken lightly, but one which you have yet to recognise publicly during your tenure at the Department for Education.

Furthermore, the Department for Education has supported governors and trustees in different ways and to different extents over the years, making a small but important contribution to the recruitment of volunteers and their development. However, with your decision announced today to remove the final piece of DfE governance funding from September - that for the recruitment of governors - you as a Government are no longer supporting in any way this enormous band of selfless people governing our schools and trusts. This has never happened before during NGA's existence. You are taking them for granted.

NGA's annual governance surveys – data shared with your department – shows clearly that the recruitment and retention of volunteers is becoming increasingly difficult, and your withdrawal of the funding of the Inspiring Governance service can only make that worse. For a number of years, we have been asking your department to undertake a marketing campaign to encourage people to volunteer, as has happened for example with the TA and magistrates. We very much hope to see that happening soon.

We have also asked for a small proportion of the funding assigned to leadership programmes to be allocated to governance leaders.

NGA will of course continue to support governing boards, but the fact that your Government seems willing to overlook their contribution is nothing short of a disgrace.

Yours sincerely,



Emma Knights OBE and Emma Balchin
Co-chief Executives
National Governance Association

Cc Baroness Barran, Minister for the School System and Student Finance

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