

Geoffrey Hackett Chair of **SGA** writes: - This link between our two websites illustrates the increasing need to share experience and knowledge not only across education but up and down each strand of education. By linking with each other we can bring up to date information to governors and trustees while allowing them to be able to access useful information that can help both with challenging SEND issues and with strategic planning so making all governors aware quickly and easily of SEND issues. The inclusion of SEND children means that the SEND governor has to be aware of many other issues such as health and safety, child protection and the curriculum development as well as special needs provision and facilitation.

When I became a Governor some twelve years ago though there were some challenges and pressures to capacity in some primary schools Surrey Education in many ways seemed to have most of the facilities and abilities to cover the wide range and numbers of SEND children; though even then it was obvious that the amount of SEND children was beginning to grow, This was very high in some areas and very low in other areas it was also notable that there were far more pressures in early years and primary education than in secondary and higher education.

Having become a Governor at a primary school with a Speech and Language unit that was situated close to the Surrey / London border. I became quickly aware of the support, talents and needs of SEND children and also of those who taught and supported them. As I was fortunate enough to be at a school which had the capacity, the dedication and the talented staff to develop those with a variety of SEND needs, my early impression was that in general terms a good job even some remarkable work was being done for SEND children.

It was only as I became more involved with governorship and went to training and to conferences where I met other governors then visited other schools and became an Advanced Skills Governor (ASG) that I realized the provision

for SEND children was very patchy for while some were being supported very well many were being side-lined.

Then even worse looking at the data I became aware that the number of children in all categories was on a continuous growth rate and that the pressure on needs was beginning to move up into secondary and higher education where there was neither the capacity nor the experience to the same extent. Added to this the attempts to rectify the disaster created to the economy of the banking crash was not helping to increase resources but was helping increase the numbers in deprivation.

Well the growth in numbers is still on the same accelerating projection, the knowledge base has been expanded but the pressure is now being faced by more schools yet even so there is still a distinct similarity to the profile of twelve years' ago. Fortunately, our experienced greater knowledge allows us to know that the earlier we can establish the needs, then the better we can provide the interventions and support, these SEND children need. The key being that the younger we are able to make a start in supporting them the more able the children become to meet the demands of secondary education and essentially of life's demands beyond education.

It has also become clear that the more we can share our knowledge the better we can tailor the support for the majority. Also importantly the more we can help to retain these children within the mainstream the better their chances in later life and if we can resolve some of the imbalances this causes and some of the poor practices that developed from ignorance or self-interest in an attempt to mitigate those problems like, off-rolling or inappropriately streaming into special classes or persuading into home education. Then the results even without the resources can be much better for many of the children who are in many of the SEND categories.

I believe that the greater inclusion of a governance overview and the development of all Governors and Trustees knowledge as well as all school leaders' knowledge as to the scope and width of SEND will all greatly help the provision. While it will not stop the increasing numbers coming into

education I am sure that with shared knowledge, a challenge to improve the current provision and capacity will ultimately bring a far better and rewarding outcome for many more children.

For governors who want to find out more relevant information, training and challenging debate or link to many other schools, organisations and receive regular updates then using the links between the SGA one stop knowledge website and the SEND

Teaching School will help us all in working together to make a difference to so many children's development.

<https://www.surreygovernance.org.uk>

<https://www.sendteachingschool.co.uk>

The **SGA** website is dedicated to supporting governance in Surrey