



Permanent Secretary

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Graham Stuart
Education Committee
House of Commons
7 Millbank
London

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Dear Mr Stuart

Thank you for your letter of 5th February, regarding the memorandum my department submitted to the Committee on the Governance and leadership of the Department for Education.

You asked for more detail on Non-Executive Board Members' appointments and on staff morale. Please find enclosed a response which deals with each of these points.

Yours sincerely

Chris Wormald

**CHRIS WORMALD
PERMANENT SECRETARY**

Governance and leadership of the Department for Education

Appointments of Non Executive Board Members

The process for appointing Non Executive Board Members across Government is deliberately designed to afford departments maximum flexibility over their appointments, in order to ensure that Government is able to attract the highest calibre individuals into these key roles. Secretaries of State recommend candidates for approval by the Government Lead Non Executive (and, in the case of Lead Non Executives, to the Prime Minister). These candidates can be identified in a variety of ways, with the advice of the Government Lead Non Executive and Minister for the Cabinet Office, and are selected by Secretaries of State based on their merits.

Paul Marshall was identified by the Secretary of State and David Laws as somebody who could play the vital role of Lead NEBM extremely well, given his in-depth knowledge of the education system and his experience of both running a high performing organisation in the private sector and being the Chair of ARK, a top Academy sponsor.

David Meller was chosen by the Secretary of State from a list of names provided by officials, drawn from recommendations and candidates who had expressed an interest in joining a Government Board. This list was drawn up with input from the Governance Reform Team in the Cabinet Office. David's wide-ranging experience in sponsoring Academies and UTCs, his involvement in children's-focussed charities and his business acumen made him a strong candidate for a NEBM role.

Jim O'Neill was recommended to the Secretary of State by Paul Marshall as someone who would bring a vast amount of experience and expertise to the Board, and who in particular would be able to support and challenge the Department on its implementation of the vital reforms set out in the Analysis chapter of the DfE Review. The Secretary of State recommended Jim for appointment to Lord Browne on account of his excellent analytical and commercial experience and his chairmanship of the Charity SHINE.

We were very grateful for the Committee's recommendation that we 'consider appointing a Non Executive Board member with specific knowledge' of children's services. This was considered alongside other demands for new expertise on the Board, and other sources of advice and scrutiny available to the Department. Ultimately it was felt that the Department was already able to draw upon sufficient other sources of senior challenge from those with children's services expertise – not least Sir Martin Narey, the former Chief Executive of Barnado's, as the Secretary of State's adviser on children's social care; Isabelle Trowler (the Government's Chief Social Worker); and Clive Cowdery, the founder of the Resolution Foundation, who is supporting work on the children's social care innovation programme.

The Board has been hugely strengthened through the appointments of Paul, David and Jim. In particular, they are bringing challenge to some of the

Department's most critical areas. These include driving improvements in the use of data for decision-making, increased focus on raising staff capability, a greater focus on commerciality, and driving improvements in programme and project management and delivery.

Staff Morale

Analysis of a wide range of evidence, including the people survey results, shows that staff have found some of the changes the Department has implemented as part of the DfE Review difficult. As explained in our initial memorandum, the Department's Management Committee does not underestimate the challenges posed by the degree of change the Department is undergoing.

Two of the clear themes which emerged from our analysis are the need to demonstrate more visible senior leadership and the need to give clearer messages about the Department's vision. We have therefore launched a programme of Management Committee-led staff events, across all DfE sites, every week throughout 2014. These sessions are being used to communicate the vision and gain feedback from staff on where they want to see improvements.

In response to concerns raised about the how the Department manages change, we are developing capability in our leaders through a formal programme of change leadership development. This will ensure that leaders are better equipped to manage change effectively for their team members. We also hold a quarterly SCS conference that ensures our leadership team are invested in and working cohesively together.

We continue to prioritise learning and development across the Department, building on the positive response we have had to the programme of all staff sessions. In addition, we have launched a development programme for high potential middle managers, based on the successful programme we launched for members of the Senior Civil Service last year.

It is worth highlighting the fact that the high level results of the staff survey mask wider variations in different areas of the organisation. We are using the detail of the survey to ensure there are specific interventions in areas where engagement has been particularly poor, and individual Directorates are responsible for tailoring activities to best meet the needs of their staff.

Finally, we have developed a pulse survey which will be conducted regularly throughout the year to ensure that we better understand the morale in the organisation at more regular points. We have dedicated time in the monthly Management Committee meetings to review progress and agree any further specific intervention required.