

Chair of Governors Update

Thursday, 5 November 2020

Dear colleagues,

The news that all schools will remain open as we enter the second national lockdown today will be resonating across personal and professional communities. We all recognise the importance of ensuring that young people can connect with their peers in school, where they feel a strong sense of unity and belonging. We also know that the chance to learn can change a child's life.

As we continue to live and work in the 'new normal' era of a pandemic, our school leaders will be constantly reviewing risk assessment measures. Most importantly, they will be working with staff teams to make sure that every child's welfare and learning is cared for, particularly those who will be most disadvantaged by the impact of these circumstances. The number of Hackney pupils sent home to quarantine has so far been low overall. However, should any school be alerted to a positive case they will be supported to make informed decisions about who needs to isolate, whilst ensuring learning continues seamlessly between school and home.

At our **Hackney Governors Virtual Forums at 6pm on Tuesday 24 November 2020**, we will address your anticipated questions and offer guidance to support our schools. We will particularly consider how schools retain their strategic focus on educating our most vulnerable and marginalised children, including those with SEND, whilst making sure everyone remains safe during these challenging times. We very much hope you can join us.

As the resilience of the nation is further tested in the coming months, we will need to continue to work together to give Hackney children the best learning experience and a brighter future!

Sincerely

Maggie Kalnins, Leader of Governance Services

Roadmap for Continuing of Strategic Governance 2020/21

This guidance complements the roadmap themes and key questions, which we have updated for the Autumn term and [can be viewed here](#).

Theme 1: Reopening to wider groups of children – what have been the successes and what are the challenges still to be addressed?

Relevant Announcements & Reports

- **School risk assessment** - In accordance with principles of good governance, boards will be working in close partnership with their school leaders to

provide appropriate support and challenge regarding risk assessment and management of safety for all staff and children in the school. Governors will seek to be assured through regular updates at meetings (or other means) that their school has taken reasonable steps to implement Government and HSE guidance.

- **The Health and Safety Executive** has further clarified ways that school risk assessments assist in improving Covid-19 controls. These include 2 m distance from which staff teach pupils; ensure ventilation and cleaning; minimise face to face staff meetings; distancing for shared spaces used by staff / peripatetic workers/ kitchen & catering staff; for year 7 and above, face coverings should be worn by adults and pupils when moving around where social distancing cannot easily be maintained. Arrangements for open days and parents evenings should also follow the same public health principles. However, we recommend that traditional face to face parents' evenings and open evenings do not take place for the time being.
- **Analysis: School attendance rates across the UK since full reopening -** Education Policy Institute (EPI) finds that the most disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils in the UK are more likely to have missed the most learning time as a result of the disruption to schools.

Governor Training - hosted virtually:

- **How do Governing Boards Strategically Assess and Manage Risks in their Schools?** Tuesday, 17 November 2020, 6pm to 8pm

Theme 2: Preparations for September and beyond - planning for different scenarios

Relevant Announcements & Reports:

- **Ofsted interim visits to schools** during the second lockdown starting on 5th November. Ofsted will continue remotely where they can, only going on site where it is necessary to do so, or in response to urgent concerns. Evidence gathered from pilot visits during September can be found [here](#) and the Chief Inspector's commentary [here](#).
- **Ofsted inspection exemption for 'outstanding' providers** will be lifted and initial inspections of formerly exempt schools, colleges and other settings will begin once Ofsted's regular school inspections restart. All formerly exempt schools, colleges and other organisations must receive an initial section 5 or section 8 inspection within 6 years.
- **AS, A Level and GCSEs exams** will go ahead 3 weeks later next summer, underpinned by contingencies for all possible scenarios. This is deemed as the fairest and most accurate way to measure attainment.
- **Existing statutory key stage 1 and 2 assessments** are expected to return in 2020/21. This includes tests and teacher assessment, Phonics screening check and year 4 multiplication tables check
- **National Tutoring Programme** available to state-maintained primary and secondary schools, a scheme launching from November and delivered through 2 strands: **Tuition Partners** who will provide tutoring, subsidised by 75%, for pupils most in need. **Academic Mentors**, for students with whom

they can build a meaningful and stable relationship and access intensive catch up support

- **Headteacher Standards published October 2020** outlines the ethics and professional conduct expected of headteachers and governance as an important part of the system of school accountability.
- **Being Strategic A guide for governing boards and school leaders – Updated October 2020**: describes how mission, values and culture relate to strategy and why it is important for governing boards to be aware of the culture and climate in their school(s).
- **School and Trust Governance Investigative Report October 2020 –NFER:** investigative research explores governance structures and the distribution of responsibility, size and characteristics of boards, recruitment and retention, and the experiences of and challenges faced by those involved in governance.

Governor Training - hosted virtually:

- **Stakeholder Engagement and Complaints: How do Governing Boards Ensure Effective Engagement with Stakeholders and Effectively Manage Complaints?** Thursday, 19 November 2020, 6pm to 8pm
- **How does the Chair of Governors Shape Strong Governance and what is Distinct about their Role?** Thursday, 3 December 2020, 6pm to 8pm

Theme 3: Staffing matters

Relevant Announcements & Reports:

- **Health and safety advice for staff:** Governors will seek to be assured that all staff have access to adequate training to enable them to carry out their responsibilities safely. They will also seek to assure the highest level of safety practice is maintained and kept under careful and regular review.
- **Promoting a culture of wellbeing in schools and trusts-** NGA evaluation tool for governing boards and school leaders to review and address emerging issues

Theme 4: Inequality and community cohesion

Relevant Announcements & Reports:

- **On Diversity - an essay collection** celebrates six trustees from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds, who reflect on their lives and experiences, and what the education sector needs to do to improve diversity. Matthew Syed's introductory message explains how diversity will not be achieved through a diversity statement on a website. It does not mean just respecting or appreciating different viewpoints, it is embracing the value of diversity as a culture.
- **Diverse educators** – a grassroots community, with content produced by serving educators, for educators addressing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- **Left behind white pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds – Inquiry** by the Education Committee investigates the issues faced by disadvantaged

groups, with an initial inquiry into the educational underachievement of white pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds including white working class pupils.

Governor Training - hosted virtually:

- **Tackling Inequalities: How can Governors Improve Outcomes for those at Risk of Exclusion and What Should they know before Considering an Exclusion?** Thursday, 12 November 2020, 6pm to 8pm
- **Tackling Inequalities: How do Governors Ensure an Inclusive Approach for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities?** Tuesday, 17 November 2020, 9am to 11am

Theme 5: Financial management matters

Relevant Announcements & Reports:

- **COVID-related cost burdens and loss of income:** governors will seek to monitor continuing 'exceptional costs' and reduce income from eg school lettings, to understand the impact and implications for the school's longer term budget
- **COVID-related change and/or termination of service contracts:** to ensure that the second lockdown does not impact on delivery of eg cleaning and catering in keeping the school operations running smoothly

Autumn 2020/ 21: Top Tips for Governing Boards

To support the effective, ethical and accountable governance of your school we share these top tips. They reflect common issues that can place your school at risk of significant challenges about non-compliance by parents, Ofsted and other key stakeholders.

- **Publish on your school's website** key documents agreed by your board that show how your school is being governed during 2020/21:
 - Full Governing Board and committee membership names, and terms of office of each member
 - Names of governors with key roles (e.g. Chair; Vice-Chair, SEND / Safeguarding link governor)
 - Annual declaration of Business and Pecuniary interests of every member
 - Attendance record of every board member during 2019/20
 - Committee terms of reference to clarify how the board delegates key matters to smaller groups of governors
 - Statutory policies reflect all updates in accordance with regulations (e.g. Safeguarding; Complaints; Behaviour; Sex and Education)
 - Financial Transparency: From 1st January 2021, Maintained schools, must publish the number of school employees where gross annual salary equal to or exceeds £100,000. This requirement started 1 September 2020 for Academies
- Understand **how your school engages with all parents** and other key stakeholders ensuring the spirit of listening, being heard and swiftly resolving issue is central to this

- Ensure all formal **discussions and minutes reflect due diligence** and challenge for robust key decision making, supported by advance circulation of papers; (eg: finance, quality of education; safety and wellbeing of pupils & staff)
- **Ensure diversity** in your succession planning and recruitment all governors positions: Chair and Vice-Chair elections, and new governor nominations, elections and appointments
- **Headteacher's performance management** in maintained schools needs to be done by the 31st December (or date stated in school policy), and include appointing a suitably qualified external adviser chosen by the board to support the process. DfE guidance stipulates that schools should 'use their discretion' and take 'pragmatic steps', to adapt performance management arrangements and seek alternative evidence where possible to evaluate the objective in light of current circumstances. Reference: [Effectively Managing Headteachers Performance Review \(January 2014\)](#).

Support for governors and schools to address these and other matters is available from Hackney Education: School improvement, Governance and other skilled experts.

Governance Training

Our governance training and Virtual Forums draw on the insights and ideas that have emerged, and focus on key issues. Relevant training is highlighted in each section of this update and you will find our full offer in our [Governance Training Programme at a Glance](#).