

Chair Of Governors Update

29 April 2021

Dear Colleagues,

At our governors' forum last week, which coincided with the annual remembrance of Stephen Lawrence, we addressed Inequality and Racism. We felt this was the perfect moment to reflect and recognise the part we all play in creating education environments in which everyone can flourish.

Hackney Council is committed to be an anti-racist organisation. Alongside our school leaders and governors, the determination to tackle disparity, disproportionality and discrimination, is evident. We know by working together, that we can develop newly informed policies and practices. This will enable sustained systemic change and ensure the benefits of privilege are shared equally with those who lack it the most.

We hope you find the content of this update particularly informative and that it inspires your work in supporting your school leaders. We remind you to hold the date for our next Governors Virtual forum on Thursday 24 June where we will explore more key matters. For reference, you may wish to look at past updates and tools, including the [summer term agenda template](#), our 2020/21 training programme and Governance Services offer all designed to assist the crucial work you do. We encourage you to share this update with board members and your wider networks, who can subscribe here to be included in our future communications. We also encourage you to get in touch if you have any query regarding governance, no matter how small, or you wish to find out how our services can support your school. It is always our pleasure to help.

On a final note that reflects the closing remarks from Anne Canning, we thank you for your courageous and generous leadership as governors. We recognise the critical role you play in keeping the Hackney education system together, and in steering the work of our schools, so we can give the very best to our children, staff and their families.

Sincerely,

Maggie Kalnins, Leader of Governance Services

Key Matters Shared at the Virtual Governors Forum on 24 March 2021

Cross-referenced with our Roadmap for Continuing of Strategic Governance in 20/21 Within these notes, we reference key matters shared at the Virtual Governors Forum on 24 March, highlight relevant announcements & reports, and signpost training opportunities. These are presented to complement the 5 themes of the Roadmap for Continuing of Strategic Governance which can be found here.

Theme 1/2: Preparations for January and beyond - planning for different scenarios

Key Matters Shared at the Virtual Governors Forum: Hackney Context

Across Hackney **attendance** is around 93%, a little below non-Covid expectations and this is a credit to school leaders. Governors must ask school leaders about pupil attendance and focus on how to get every child back into school.

Parents moving their children into **elective home education** are represented across different community groups; with significant numbers amongst the Traveller community and an increase in children from Black Caribbean families. Governors should ask school leaders about children from these groups.

It is really important to robustly **maintain Covid safety measures** such as hand cleaning, social distancing, bubbles, face masks in public places and no unnecessary visitors, Governors must ensure that these efforts continue. There are challenges with getting pupils / families to report the results of the **lateral flow tests** done at home. Hackney is encouraging schools to hold Public Health workshops to encourage this practice. The vaccination roll out continues. There has been some hesitancy in Hackney and **Public Health are offering talks about vaccination**, and head teachers know how to arrange this for staff members or members of the community.

School admissions: many schools are not full, which is the case across a number of London boroughs. Last year we reduced the planned admission numbers for some schools to address these issues. Hackney Education is developing a wider strategy over the coming 3-4 months to consider how we manage reduction in school admission. This will include addressing the **need for more special needs places in Hackney**, and knowledge that more families will move to particular areas where there is housing development. A letter has been sent to school leaders and Chairs and we will engage a small number in a working group for this strategy..

Support for staff will be needed to help them identify where there are **gaps in skills and knowledge** of pupils, to modify their methodology and to adjust the curriculum to address these gaps.

Schools should be encouraged to think about the use of **Catch Up Premium**. By identifying pupils who this should be spent on and ensuring that it is evidence informed, and publishing this strategy on the school website, Governors need to be aware of how their schools are addressing this.

Formal, statutory **assessments** this year have been cancelled, however this term teachers will be assessing pupils and evaluating their attainment. Schools are encouraged to use previous papers where needed to build an understanding of the learning. Cross borough moderation is also offered. In **Key Stages 4 and 5**, the exam boards have published guidance which also covers fair moderation and the appeals process.

Virtual Forum for Hackney Governors Side 6/7

Guidance is available for the summer term provision for **Years 11 and 13** students, after they complete their exam period, to ensure that they are gainfully occupied, and given the opportunities and support they need to prepare for the next stage in their learning or lives.

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Ofsted have released guidance this week about how they plan to inspect schools later this term and, in the future, to take into account the impact of Covid. They will not inspect secondary schools until after May half term due to the focus on exam preparation, however they will be visiting inadequate schools or those with two required improvement gradings, or Good schools that have not been inspected within five years.

Virtual Forum for Hackney Governors Slide 7

Sexual harassment and sexual violence, the death of Sarah Everard sparked the movement www.everyonesinvited.uk. **Ofsted will undertake an immediate review of safeguarding policies and practices in respect of peer to peer abuse** in both state and independent schools. This is to ensure schools have appropriate processes in place to allow pupils to report concerns freely and dealt with appropriately. The review will conclude by the end of May 2021. Hackney Education has also sent out information and guidance to chairs and leaders of our schools.

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Governors must look at whether **school safeguarding policies** are robust and able to deal with peer on peer abuse, and whether staff know how to deal with these kinds of issues. Are pupils confident about how to report incidents and as Governors are you confident pupils feel safe in your school? We know that a lot of the children did not report incidents at the time so the mechanisms for reporting and for making children feel safe must be sufficiently robust. Governors must ensure that there are systems for reporting incidents that capture and identify where the trends are. They should also **ensure that safeguarding policies on websites** are up to date and reflect these emerging issues.

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The DfE has commissioned the **NSPCC to run a helpline for reporting abuse in education**, offer advice to victims and provide support to professionals. DfE has also issued guidance on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children in Schools and Colleges.

Development Matters is a helpful document outlining what students should be learning at that point in time and what should be seen. Further helpful guidance can be found at **Birth to 5 Matters**. Governors should be asking schools how they are preparing students and staff for the incoming reception cohort and what might be different.

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Relevant Announcements & Reports

The DfE have published their latest governance update April 21 for those governing in both maintained schools and academy trusts. This update includes:

1. Governing and trust boards should continue to take a pragmatic and safe and blended approach to their meetings, and visits into schools.
2. Subsidised National Tutoring Programme: can be provided to pupils at home or in school. And includes specialist provision for supporting students with SEND/in special schools..
3. Early Career Framework (ECF) statutory induction guidance change from September 2021,
4. Consider submitting an honours nomination for someone who works in or governs schools
5. Inspiring Governance and Academy Ambassadors are free services that assist in finding the person with the right skills and experience to fill the role of governors and trustees
6. Guidance for academies on how to complete/ update your governance contacts on Get Information about Schools (GIAS)

Speak for Change April 2021 - this final report and recommendations is a culmination of the Speak for Change Inquiry, from 2019, hearing evidence from a range of people/organisations and young people.

Children's commissioner launches largest ever consultation with children: The Big Ask survey,, seeking to understand the impact of the pandemic on the lives of children,

their hopes and ambitions, and what is holding them back. The results will inform the Children's Commission, a 'once in a generation' review of the future of childhood.

Summer 2021 assessments: Under-grading concerns for disadvantaged students:

Concerns have been raised around the potential under-grading of socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in this summer's assessments. The concerns follow Ofqual's recent review of the research literature about teacher assessment. In guidance published last month, Ofqual listed the 9 main biases and warned centres of the risk of objective judgments being negatively affected by these.

Hackney's Ordinarily Available Provision Guidancer .This consultation has been published on Hackney's Local Offer website and information and the draft version of Hackney's Ordinarily Available Provision can be found here.

NAHT-Improving Schools Commission Report: examines the balance between accountability and how schools best improve.

Reminder: **Leading in a New Era**, a research work with 6 Headteachers of Hackney Schools explores aspects of their leadership approach, their responses to lockdown and reflecting on the implications for the future of school leadership.

Governor Training - hosted virtually:

- **Wellbeing: How do Governors Ensure the Development of Emotional, Mental Health and Wellbeing of Children?** Thursday, 6 May 2021, 9.am to 11.am
- **Introduction – How do Governors Fulfil their Professional and Ethical Responsibility?** Tuesday, 18 May, 6.pm to 8.pm
- **Stakeholder Engagement and Complaints: How do Governing Boards Ensure Effective Engagement with Stakeholders and Effectively Manage Complaints?** Wednesday, 26 May 2021, 6.pm to 8.pm
- **Tackling Inequalities: How do Governors Ensure an Inclusive Approach for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities?**Thursday, 10 June 2021, 9.am to 11.am
- **How does the Chair of Governors Shape Strong Governance and what is Distinct about their Role** Tuesday, 15 June 2021, 9.am to 11.am
- **How do Governing Boards Strategically Assess and Manage Risks in their Schools?** Tuesday, 6 July 2021, 6.pm to 8.pm

Theme 3: Staffing matters

Key Matters Shared at the Virtual Governors Forum: Hackney Context

Staff training, recruitment, retention, promotion and professional development must be considered in terms of being absolutely fair, and inequalities that have existed must be addressed.

Governors should consider **reviewing their staff wellbeing surveys**. Chairs of Governors should be asking head teachers about their wellbeing. The National Education Union is concerned about workload and head teachers feel that it is becoming a high profile agenda and their senior teams have more work than they had pre-Covid. These are factors and variables that Governors should discuss with head teachers and SLTs in terms of how they are faring on a day to day basis.

Long Covid: some staff have been very unwell, but are well enough to return to school. However they may have remaining symptoms, require a phased return and need support. Governors must understand the impact of this on the school. Guidance is available from the Local Government Association as well as legal bodies due to potential long term ramifications for individuals. There is also anxiety amongst staff about returning to school. Governors should therefore consider the staff absences and support mechanisms in light of these emerging issues.

Governor Training - hosted virtually:

- **Staff Welfare, Morale and Workload: How do Governing Boards Create Excellent Workplaces that Support Staff Welfare, Manage Performance and Oversees Organisational Changes?** Tuesday, 11 May 2021, 9.am to 11.am

Theme 4: Inequality and community cohesion

Key Matters Shared at the Virtual Governors Forum: Hackney Context

Hackney Council's anti racism motion was passed in July 2020, which states that Hackney Council commits to be an anti racism organisation, that does not just tackle inequality but actively fights racism in the borough. Hackney's Anti Racism Plan: Same journey, new map.

Hackney Education aims for **every child to feel they belong and treated equally** across our schools; that they have a curriculum that reflects them and their history, that parents are all equally welcomed/involved in the PTA and Governors meetings; that staff reflect the children and that there is training for staff on these issues so that they become more articulate about equalities.

Hackney Education has developed a **new and successful curriculum** which was created by highly skilled Hackney teachers. Currently just over 1500 schools have engaged with the curriculum, both nationally and internationally.

Virtual Forum for Hackney Governors Side 20

In schools we are continuing to look at inequality and racism, through strands of disparity, disproportionality and discrimination. We are familiar with seeing performance gaps in relation to Black Caribbean, Black African and other groups against the Hackney average. Governors should ask schools about the degree and pace of these gaps narrowing.

Policies and practice are being developed to enable sustained systemic change in terms of culture and cultural competence. We are looking at schools and government bodies and recruitment practices. We have begun work with pupils and primary and secondary schools and early years settings have developed workshops and surveys to capture the pupil voice.

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Training on unconscious bias and cultural competence is being delivered across schools, services and the wider Council. Cultural competence training has been found to be really useful. Benchmark indicators that Governors may consider as a board such as: cultural blindness, cultural competence, cultural proficiency.

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How can we help support a more reflective staffing cohort? There is some **guidance on the recruitment and retention of staff and the role of Governors** in this HR newsletter which contains links to all those documents and policies which will be useful for Governors.

Steps to diversify governing boards: Governing boards should invite parents to attend a meeting to find out what it is like to be a governor. Hackney Education is also launching a new pilot programme to place younger people on Governing Boards.

Relevant Announcements & Reports

Reminder reference: **Listening to Parents and Carers Talking about Race** - Hackney Schools Group Board report on parental engagement sessions with 6 volunteer schools.

GUIDE TO ALLYSHIP: An open source starter guide to help you become a more thoughtful and effective ally.

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, 17 June 2021, 6.pm to 8.pm
- **Tackling Inequalities: Hackney Young Black Men Initiative – Understanding Cultural Competency, Racial Identity and Unconscious Bias** Tuesday, 22 June 2021, 6.pm to 8.pm sch

Theme 5: Financial management matters

Relevant Announcements & Reports

Budgets will need consideration in relation to reception numbers, and Governors must consider this impact on the next few years.

It is statutory that schools publish on their website how **Pupil Premium** money. For the first time this year, the Government has produced templates in order for schools to do this. Governors must be aware of this information and the requirement for its publication.

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Secondary schools have been provided with **funding for summer schools** primarily for incoming Year 7 students. Eligible secondary schools can access the funding allocations to view the maximum available funding for their school, based on numbers of year 7 pupils.

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Governors and trustees should be supported to scrutinise approaches to catch-up, including plans for and use of catch-up funding. This should include consideration of whether schools are spending this funding in line with their catch-up priorities, and ensuring appropriate transparency for parents e.g. placing this on the school website. Schools are advised to set out expenditure in a clear and simple format that allows for this scrutiny. An example of this can be found here. Schools should use this funding for specific activities to support their pupils to catch up for lost teaching over the previous months, in line with the curriculum expectations for the next academic year.

The coronavirus (**COVID-19**) **free school meals additional costs online form** for schools and colleges is now live. Settings can now claim additional costs for free school meals (FSM) provision. Guidance has been published to help you complete the form.

Analysis from the Education Policy Institute (EPI) concludes that a three-year package between **£10-15 billion is needed for students to catch up on lost learning.** The government has so far provided short-term funding of £1.7 billion for education recovery and is currently formulating a comprehensive catch-up package. The EPI stated that funding should be targeted towards existing cost-effective, evidence-based interventions. The long-term consequences of failing to address lost learning will likely impact young people's education, health and development and result in lost lifetime income and the widening of inequalities.

Governor Training - hosted virtually:

- **How do Governing Boards Make the Right Strategic Financial Choices for their School?** Tuesday, 4 May 2021, 6.pm to 8.pm



The Chair of Governors Update is published by the Governors Services Team, Hackney Education.

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