

Chair Of Governors Update

Friday, 2 October 2020

Dear colleagues

At our virtual forum last week, we were delighted to see so many Hackney governors and leaders. This was testimony to the commitment and support to your schools, as is the remarkable resilience with which our school leaders are managing challenging priorities in this 'new normal'.

In this update, we reference key matters shared at the forum, highlight relevant broadcasts and signpost training opportunities. We particularly draw your attention to Theme 1: successes and challenges of children returning to schools, and Theme 4 addressing Inequality and community cohesion, including the recent publication from the Hackney Schools Board - [Leading in the New Era](#) and [Listening to Parents and Carers Talking About Race](#). At the end of this update, we also share our Autumn Top Tips for governing boards.

We hope this update will help you in supporting your school leaders and navigate the governance of schools in this 'new normal'. We remind you of our [previous updates and tools](#), 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.

In the meantime, if you have any query regarding governance, no matter how small, or you wish to find out how our services can support your school, we encourage you to get in touch as it will be our pleasure to help.

As the cooler days set in, we hope you will find time with your families to enjoy the warmth of colour that autumn brings, and we wish a happy holiday to those enjoying the Jewish festival of Sukkot.

Sincerely

Maggie Kalnins, Leader of Governance Services

Key Matters Shared at the Virtual Governors Forum on 24 September 2020

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 September, 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 viewed here**.

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

Key matters shared at the Virtual Governors Forum on 24 September:

The education system has responded flexibly and responsibly, doing its utmost to hold onto the core values for children and young people, and what really counts in terms of making sure that they are safe, happy and learning. Schools learned about online education which has been really valuable, but also focused on forming strong links across Children's Social Care, an awareness of where the most vulnerable pupils are, and how schools share that knowledge.

School leaders and governors have been at the forefront of these changes. The challenges have taken **their** toll on our school leaders who are having to make decisions that perhaps are different to ones that they have made before, as well as vast judgement calls in terms of reassuring staff, pupils and families that it is safe to be at school and, that learning counts and is still the key focus.

It is important for governors, leaders and education professionals to come together, to share information and experiences and to get answers to questions in an ever changing situation. We thank all governors and **commend** your role in supporting the wellbeing of Head teachers, to ensure they are delegating and resting as it is going to be a difficult and challenging six months.

We know a second wave is coming and we are planning for that. We have a very accomplished corporate plan in the Council which has stood the test of time. Experience shows us that a whole systems approach that is asset-based is crucial in dealing with issues ie: health, police, businesses; schools working closely with partners, including Children's Social Care and other safety support.

There has been huge lobbying with Central Government about exams, taking away free travel for under 18s, fairer national transfer scheme for unaccompanied asylum seekers. Education has stimulated this agenda for Central Government amidst the importance of keeping the schools open and communities safe.

Relevant Announcements & Reports

- [Lost Learning, Lost Earnings: Sutton Trust report](#)
- [Parental engagement is key to overcoming continued disruption](#): partnerships are central to overcoming challenges, writes Leora Cruddas
- [How does developing essential skills improve life outcomes?](#) explores the relationship between young people's skills development, and life outcomes
- [Wellbeing for Education Return](#): DfE and Department of Health and Social Care to provide funding & resources to promote children and young people's wellbeing, resilience, and recovery in response to Covid-19. In Hackney this work will be integrated into the Wellbeing and Mental Health in Schools (WAMHS) programme and available to all schools.
- [Coronavirus data](#) - produced by the joint City and Hackney Public Health Intelligence Team to help track the Covid-19 pandemic.

Governor Training - hosted virtually:

- **Wellbeing: How do Governors Ensure the Development of Emotional, Mental Health and Wellbeing of Children?** Tuesday, 13 October 2020, [9.am](#) to [11.am](#)
- **Safeguarding: How do Governors Fulfil their Responsibility to Safeguard and Protect Children?** Wednesday, 14 October [9.am](#) to [11.am](#) OR Tuesday, 1 December 2020, 6pm to 8pm FREE TO ALL HACKNEY SCHOOLS

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

Key matters shared at the Virtual Governors Forum on 24 September:

(refer also to powerpoint slide attached)

Pupil attendance across Hackney has been 88%, matching the national average. Schools face huge challenges in terms of changes to timetables, start and end times, outdoor sports, lunch times, and moving pupils around the school. They are tackling the issue of Children missing education and how do we reach those children particularly when they are not at school, how do we share that information and make sure that we are working collaboratively. Access to Covid testing is impacting on attendance, along with other reasons: anxiety, coughs and colds, quarantining. There has also been a slight increase in elective home education. The amount of time being lost due to bubbles being sent home is 0.2%, so the majority of children are continuing to get a full time education.

High quality of education: lessons should be meaningful and ambitious, and cover a number of different subjects in a day, provide frequent clear explanations of new content, delivered by a teacher in the school, through videos or other resources depending on the age group of the children. Schools must remain aware of the digital divide, ensure the teaching quality is more important than the quantity, and check the suitability of tasks, opportunity to reflect and question. They also need to understand remote learning must include different types of content for pupils, different approaches for different learners, encourage regular interactions and feedback. Motivation for both children and adults is also a real challenge.

The DfE released **guidance and expectations on remote learning** with the expectation that schools have contingency plans for remote learning by the end of September 2020. These contingency plans should be sequences of learning planned rather than just links to websites. Younger and SEND pupils may need a different type of provision both in school and remotely.

Ofsted are conducting a one day visit to some schools between now and the end of December, around 5% (1500 schools) nationally. They focus on how well schools are coping, discussing barriers, implementing the curriculum (in school and remotely), attendance, how pupils are settling back and safeguarding and provision for SEND pupils. There will be no evaluation or graded judgement of the school.

GCSE and A Level results showed significant differences between final grades and the original calculated grades and in Hackney all marks were above the national averages. The Hackney focus groups will look at disadvantaged groups, including Black Caribbean and Black African, with attention given to the strategies and approaches schools are taking to prevent any further widening of the gaps, related to Covid-19. This will also focus on use of additional funding, national tutoring and pupil premium.

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 Headteacher Performance Review (January 2014). **Support for governors** is available from experts in the Hackney School Improvement Team.

Relevant Announcements & Reports:

- Remote learning policy: by the end of September 2020, schools are expected to have a remote learning plan in case children need to self-isolate or there is a local lockdown. These links provide: DfE [guidance and expectations on remote learning: Get help with remote education](#); [Remote education good practice and Remote education webinars](#). A sample can be found [here](#), and our Hackney Education Remote Learning Principles and Guidance [here](#)
- Teaching about relationships, sex and health: From September 2020 all schools must consider the statutory guidance when teaching [relationships, sex and health education](#). Working with [subject experts](#), the DfE has developed a series of training modules to help schools. Guidance and links to materials can be found [here](#).
- [Blended learning in school education – guidelines for the start of the academic year 2020/21](#)
- [What effective professional learning could look like in the near future](#)
- [Remote Teacher Development Guide](#)
- [Rob Coe looking at assessment in distance learning](#):
- [Ambition Institute: How to teach effectively online](#)
- [Remote schooling: new EEF evidence review highlights core features that can unlock its potential](#)
- [Schools and Charity Partnerships: Challenges and solutions](#)

Governor Training - hosted virtually:

- **Introduction – How do Governors Fulfil their Professional and Ethical Responsibility?** Tuesday, 6 October 2020, 6pm to 8pm, FREE TO ALL HACKNEY SCHOOLS
- **How do Governing Boards Strategically Assess and Manage Risks in their Schools?** Tuesday, 17 November 2020, 6pm to 8pm
- **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

Key matters shared at the Virtual Governors Forum on 24 September:

Schools have a **duty of care to ensure workforce safety**. Hackney HR have been supporting leaders with whole school risk assessment and risk assessment of staff, linking this with Health and Safety Executive requirements to ensure Head teachers and staff wellbeing.

The Hackney **vulnerability risk assessment tool** has been created for staff who are 'clinically extremely vulnerable' and 'clinically vulnerable' and to complement a risk assessment for every single member of staff, together with an individual assessment meeting, which needs to be completed by all schools. Schools are finding creative ways

with teachers and staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable, to support their return to the workplace or to working from home where possible, which is closely monitored.

The Health and Safety Executive will be making spot checks across all schools to ensure that they are Covid-19 secure and are abiding by regulations.

Hackney HR support for schools includes: HR and wellbeing guidance, and frequently asked questions; Employee Assistance Programme which is a free counselling service for all members of staff; supporting meetings and offering expert advice.

Relevant Announcements & Reports:

- **Covid-19 and the classroom:** working in education during the coronavirus pandemic: research report investigates the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing of education staff.
- What to do if a pupil or member of staff has coronavirus symptoms or tests positive for coronavirus – Hackney has updated its **standard operating practice** (SOP) for schools and settings.

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?** Wednesday, 21 October 2020, 9.am to 11.am

Theme 4: Inequality and community cohesion

Key matters shared at the Virtual Governors Forum on 24 September:

Inclusivity, cultural awareness and care has been really significant, and with our partners, we all have a responsibility both for our staff and in practice. This could be related to issues about the curriculum in schools, issues in social care, or engagement with families, which are now viewed differently than before.

We highlight two publications from the **Hackney Schools Group Board** which are both inspirational and sometimes uncomfortable reading but important for governors to be aware of: **Leading in the New Era** and **Listening to Parents and Carers Talking About Race** Eleanor Schooling, the Chair of the Board, will be discussing plans for the year ahead and the think tank for Hackney Education in the widest sense.

Inequality, Black Lives Matter and Community Cohesion: The killing of George Floyd, and its aftermath, have driven changes to take place across all organisations. Hackney Education is developing quality across education with our partners, focusing on policies and practices, how to create a diverse team, and working on developing a black curriculum with significant input from Hackney teachers. The Young Black Men's Project is 5 years into its 15 year duration with a supplemented plan. Hackney is also working with Pan London to improve practice and provide further support for other local authorities. Young people and their families in Hackney have voiced that they do not want the curriculum to dwell on a singular narrative of oppression, and that a lot of the black history they have heard up until now is very much about the black community being oppressed, overwhelmed and overcome. Instead, they wish to include successes and

areas of strength and pride, and values that all of the children should be able to recognise and see.

Hackney also has a strand of work with staff and their own education in understanding the impact of inequality and structural inequality. This is joined by ensuring that systems in all our educational settings are fair in terms of recruitment, professional development, promotion, retention. We must make sure that we have as diverse a group of staff as possible to reflect our student bodies across the levels of seniority in place across our organisations. We must also listen to pupils and parents, and some of these discussions and cases of unfairness and discrimination are going to be uncomfortable to hear.

We have also created and revised behaviour, uniform and hair policies in schools, with a view to inclusion, and have provided guidance to schools. We are looking at pupil voices about equality and how to involve parents, focusing on inclusion and belonging.

Governors will be talking about these areas so far mentioned in the curriculum, its importance, and the pupil voice within that. Governors should also ask their schools about training of the board and staff and the actions/impact arising from this.

Diversity of governing boards is also a key focus, with parents and key stakeholders questioning more openly how well the board membership reflects the diverse community of the school. We anticipate these challenges will continue and share resources within to help governors consider how best to increase diversity of the board. We are also starting conversations with the Youth Commission about finding young people to become associates of the governing board, as over 50% of people in Hackney are under 30 years old, so it would be good to also reflect this diversity in our governing boards.

Relevant Announcements & Reports:

- Hackney Schools Group Board (HSGB) publications: [Leading in the New Era](#) and [Listening to Parents and Carers Talking About Race](#)
- [Black History Season 2020](#) - Hackney Council announces a new map charting Hackney's rich history of African and Caribbean culture is being published. Through the richly curated programme, we will share, enjoy and learn from a history that belongs to us all.
- [NGA's annual school governance survey 2020 shows the fundamentals of good governance do not change](#): but people from Black, Asian and other minority ethnicity backgrounds continue to be significantly underrepresented on governing boards. 94% identified as white, 1% identified as Black, 2% as Asian, and 1% as mixed or being of multiple ethnic groups.
- Education Policy Institute (EPI) [annual report on the state of education in England](#) - reveals impact on the attainment gap has been a continuing concern caused by lack of access to technology/internet, tuition, and lack of other crucial support and stability.
- Race and Racism in English Secondary Schools - Runnymede Perspectives June 2020 reports matters about race and racism in England's secondary schools.
- [How to increase diversity of race on school governing boards](#): a panel discussion Governors for Schools webinars - September 2020
- [Promoting anti-racism in schools – the governance of preparing all pupils for life in modern Britain](#) - July 2020
- [Racism exists. End of story. So do something about it](#) - chair of governors Olayinka Ewuola

Governor Training - hosted virtually:

- **Tackling Inequalities: Hackney Young Black Men Initiative – Understanding Cultural Competency, Racial Identity and Unconscious Bias** Tuesday, 20 October 2020, 6.pm to 8.pm
- **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

Theme 5: Financial management matters

Key matters shared at the Virtual Governors Forum on 24 September:

All local councils are facing a significant budget shortfall due direct cost related to Covid-19 and loss of income generation.

Relevant Announcements & Reports:

- **Strategic school improvement fund – emergency funding;** In the event of an emergency, DfE will consider applications to [the Strategic School Improvement Fund – emergency funding](#) to support an individual school, as opposed to a group of schools, if the supported school meets the eligibility criteria for emergency funding referenced on [this page](#).
- **High needs - amended benchmarking tool:** DfE has published an amended [high needs benchmarking tool](#), intended to help local authorities assess their own level of need, spend and pattern of provision against those of neighbouring local authorities (both geographically and statistically) and national trends. It may also be a useful tool for schools and trusts to support discussions with local authorities about their patterns of expenditure and future plans.
- **Coronavirus (COVID-19) catch-up premium:** This funding will be provided in 3 tranches and first payments have been made. Full details of the allocations and conditions of grant can be found at [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) catch-up premium: provisional allocations](#).

Governor Training - hosted virtually:

- **How do Governing Boards Make the Right Strategic Financial Choices for their School?** Wednesday, 4 November 2020, 6.pm to 8.pm

Autumn 2020/ 21: Top Tips for Governing Boards

To support the effective, ethical and accountable governance of your school we share these tops 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 Headteacher 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.



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

If you no longer wish to subscribe to this newsletter, please email us.