

# Chair of Governors Update

Friday 4 December 2020

Dear colleagues,

This week, Amanda Spielman (Her Majesty's Chief Inspector) [launched her annual report](#), reminding us how important schools are to the fabric of society, given how much they now do beyond their core educational purpose. Over the past months, we have truly understood what this means in seeing the efforts made by our leaders and staff to put children first. Working collaboratively with wider services and, going above and beyond in exceptionally challenging times, it is incredible how well our schools have supported the educational, social and personal development of Hackney children.

Governors have likewise played a key role in their public duty, offering the right balance of challenge and support, which has kept schools focused on achieving an ambitious vision for all children.

In this update, we reference the big emerging themes addressed at the virtual forum last week, where we were delighted to see so many governors. These include keeping schools open and safe, maintaining high quality education, especially for pupils with SEND and addressing critical issues on racism and inequalities, with reference to a series of [webinars on diverse governance](#). We hope the information, references, training and Autumn Top Tips for governing boards are helpful and if you have any query we encourage you to get in touch.

As 2020 ends, we reflect on this year, which has been like no other. The impact of the pandemic has affected children and their families, unsettled the economy and put people's future livelihoods at risk. It has also made us truly question how we address poverty and inequality, racism and human rights. However, these challenging times have also brought remarkable acts of kindness and new ways of working together to solve our big problems. This has included the rapid development of a vaccine protection against Covid-19 illness, with news that it will be rolled out next week.

We express our thanks for the work you do to support our children and wish you all a much deserved restful break when this term ends. We also look forward to these better ways of working that we know will bring a more prosperous year for everyone in 2021!

Sincerely,

**Maggie Kalnins, Leader of Governance Services**

## **Key Matters Shared at the Virtual Governors Forum on 24 November 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 November, 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

### November:

**Successes:** schools and settings have been a beacon in the community, resilience of pupils in schools and settings, prepared to learn, happy and making progress.

**Challenges** that schools have faced is making sure everyone is safe during this time, and ensuring pupils are all learning. Many schools have shared that pupils have fallen behind on maths due to lack of support available outside of classes.

**Pupil attendance:** It is important that children continue to attend schools everyday, to maintain a sense of normality. The bubble system in schools is working. A number of bubbles in settings have been sent home due to cases of C-19; these cases were more prevalent in primary than in secondary schools. It is important for everyone to understand the definition of close contact to identify who should be sent home if there is a confirmed case of C-19. Only a small percentage of people in Hackney were self isolating. Attendance in schools were at 85%-90%.

**Risk assessments** were still required by schools to complete. It was important for schools to have robust H&S processes in place. One advice given by Public Health is to have good ventilation in the school buildings, even though this may be difficult in the winter, schools are required to implement this. Schools also need to ensure staff, visitors and parents are aware of the protocols in place.

**The Winter Grant** was announced in response to Marcus Rashford's campaign for free school meals. Details of this will be shared with schools by Friday, 27 November. It is anticipated the grant will emerge in the form of a voucher system with some administrative responsibilities required from the schools. It is also anticipated the scheme will be extended to younger children so families will be supported. Hackney Council has partnered with Edenred to provide meal vouchers during Christmas holidays for all pupils eligible for FSM on roll at a Hackney school.

**School Place Planning:** currently, there are 14% surplus places across Hackney primary schools. This capacity needs to be taken out of the system. Discussions are underway about supporting schools to reduce PANS. A consultation is planned to take place in December on this matter.

### Relevant Announcements & Reports:

- **COVID-19 contingency framework for education and childcare settings:** The DfE has already been clear that schools should not consider closing sooner than the planned Christmas break. Ministers will consider future closures on a case-by-case basis, with priority for in-person teaching for: older pupils, vulnerable students and children of key workers.
- **National Leader of Education (NLE) support for school recovery:** The offer is for up to 5 days of an NLE (fully funded) with the possibility of an additional amount of funded time if needed to support schools with particularly challenging needs. Information can be found [here](#).

### Governor Training - hosted virtually:

- **[How do Governors Fulfil their Responsibility to Safeguard and Protect Children?](#)** Wednesday, 3 February 2021, 9-11am
- **[How do Governing Boards Strategically Assess and Manage Risks in their Schools?](#)** Tuesday, 23 February 2021, 9-11am
- **[Safeguarding: How do Governors Fulfil their Responsibility to Safeguard and Protect Children?](#)** Thursday, 1 April 2021, 6-8pm

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

### Key matters shared at the Virtual Governors Forum on 24

#### November:

**High quality of education:** Looking ahead, the unprecedented challenges have provided schools with a chance to reset. Some approaches/processes used by schools during the C-19 period have been helpful for children. Schools and governors could now think about what their 'new normal' could look like and how to implement the learnings from the processes used in the last year better. Schools should be proceeding with staff's CPD. Lesson observations need to continue and schools need to ensure that NQT and RQT have received their full entitlement of training. Schools also need to ensure parents are fully aware of the home learning offer. Headlines about Enabling the best learning experiences, Feedback from HSE Visits, Risk Assessment in Action and Ten Questions for Leaders and Governors Questions for Leaders and Governors to consider can be found in '[Governors Forum Slides](#)' attached.

**Remote education** - remote education expectations [guidance](#) by requiring schools include the requirements that : Primary pupils will have 3 hours per day, on average, Secondary pupils will have 4 hours per day. The school should have systems for checking, at least weekly, whether pupils are engaging with their work, how they are progressing and provide feedback, and inform parents immediately where engagement is a concern.

**Catch up premium** to support their pupils to catch up for lost teaching over the previous months: [guidance](#) Schools are advised to draft a strategic plan and a short statement for their websites explaining how funding will be used to support pupils, and anticipated impact

**GCSE and A Level exams and assessments:** Announcement of [measures to support pupils in next year's exams and assessments](#) includes more generous grading than usual for GCSE, AS and A levels, in line with national outcomes from 2020; students receiving advance notice of some topic areas covered to focus revision and exam aids provided in some exams to reduce the amount of information they need to memorise. At primary key stages, although performance data will not be published in 2021, teacher assessment in English reading, writing and mathematics at KS1, and most assessments at KS2 will remain.

**Ofsted, Accountability and performance tables** - test and exam results will not be included in performance tables this year. Ofsted's routine inspections will not be resumed in the spring term and that performance tables in their current form will not apply. These decisions, we believe, will declutter our teachers' time in order to let them focus on the most significant issue: teaching our young people. Further information on Ofsted can be found here : [HMCI commentary: findings from visits in October](#)- 10th November 2020, [Amanda Spielman launches Ofsted's Annual Report 2019/20](#) - 1st December 2020 and in [Ofsted's findings from schools interim visits this term - slides attached](#).

**Educating and supporting pupils with SEND in Hackney:** Schools and frontline teams supporting SEND pupils were extremely hard working. The SEND: Government Response to the Committee's First Report of Session published in July 2020, highlighted the importance of learning about the lived experience of children with SEND.

**The lived experiences of children with EHCP and parents with SEND children,** should be considered by Governors; their experience of the system and how it works in practice. Parents feel a level of stigma when accessing support and provisions. In Hackney, many of the children with an EHC Plan are accessing education within the mainstream schools.

**Resourcing of SEND:** Discussions regarding resourcing of SEND and how it has been shaped since the 2014 reforms, which implemented radical changes - majority support and funding focussed on mainstream school. In Hackney, 2600 children with an EHCP and 47% of these children attend mainstream schools. Government believes sufficient funding is coming into the system, however, lobbying is needed to ensure local authorities are adequately funded.

**In the borough there is a clear SEND programme that looked at 7 clear workstreams.**

1. Local self evaluation - how the Council is embedding the reforms of 2014.
2. Sufficiency of commissioned places - especially those out of the borough. Hackney's ambition is to increase places in the borough to reduce costs.
3. Graduated response - utilising resources in mainstream schools and specialist services to ensure children are supported in mainstream schools.
4. Assessment and planning - developing a robust multi agency assessment process to improve assessment completion rate.
5. Financial recovery plan - the borough is allocated a £40m budget but the expenditure is £50m. There is a need for an ongoing recovery plan.
6. Transport Policy - needs to be reviewed and updated.
7. Preparing for adulthood - pathways for development of pupils/ young adults up to the age of 25.

The borough has some excellent provisions and staff but also has significant work to do to improve the lived experience of children with SEND/ families. Through understanding the lived experience, Governors will be able to champion the needs of the disadvantaged pupils.

**Questions for Leaders and Governors to consider regarding SEND:** (*refer to Governors SEND' Slides attached*).

**Relevant Announcements & Reports:**

- **Special Educational Needs in mainstream schools:** The Education Endowment Fund (EEF) guidance report, 5 evidence-based recommendations to support pupils with SEND in mainstream schools. Full guidance report [here](#).
- **Best practice in remote learning:** The DfE offer several school-led [webinars](#) on remote education and help to improve the quality of their remote provision in line with the expectations set out in the [guidance for full opening](#).
- **National Tutoring Programme:** The [National Tutoring Programme](#) NTP tuition partners are subsidised by 75%. Meaning schools can purchase tutoring for four pupils for the normal cost of purchasing tutoring for a single child. Schools are free to use additional catch up funding, announced by the DfE in 2020, to pay for the remaining costs.
- **Statutory relationships, sex education and health education: primary and secondary:** By summer 2021, all schools should have begun teaching the subjects'. Schools will need to consult with; staff, pupils, parents, carers and governors, identify any staff training needed in order to support staff to teach sensitive issues confidently.. Schools need to ensure their policy meets the needs of pupils, parents and reflects the community they serve, including an explanation of the right to withdraw (e.g. Sex Education for primary schools) and requirements on schools in law (e.g. the Equality Act 2010). This policy needs to be ratified by governors at school or trust level.
- **'Something's Not Right' campaign** regarding young people at risk of harm.
- **The Teaching and Learning International survey: TALIS Video study** looks at teaching processes and practices in the secondary Mathematics classroom, a link found [here](#)
- **Ofqual equalities analysis for 2020 exams research and analysis:** suggests students were not systematically disadvantaged in 2020." [Research Analysis of VTQs](#)

- [EEF Blog: Reflections of a SENCo - the importance of a whole school approach to supporting pupils with SEND](#)
- [November 2020: State of the Nation: Understanding Public Attitudes To The Early Years](#)

### Governor Training - hosted virtually:

- [What do Governors Need to Know about the Ofsted Inspection Process?](#)  
Monday, 25 January 2021, 9-11am
- [How do Governors Fulfil their Professional and Ethical Responsibility?](#)  
Tuesday, 2 February, 9-11am
- [How do you Strengthen Governance through Effective Board Administration and Accountability?](#) Tuesday, 2 March 2021, 9-11am
- [What do Governors Need to Know about the Ofsted Inspection Process?](#)  
Thursday, 18 March 2021, 6-8pm

## Theme 3: Staffing matters

### Key matters shared at the Virtual Governors Forum on 24 November:

**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. The HR coronavirus [guidance](#) has been updated to reflect the local restriction tier system and its implications for school staff that will be in place from Wednesday, 2 December.

#### Relevant Announcements & Reports:

- **Managing staff workload:** The DfE has also produced a useful workload reduction [toolkit](#) that can support the process of considering how to reduce the pressures on teaching staff.
- **Brexit: Changes for safer recruitment:** The government has issued further guidance about school and recruitment of teachers from EEA countries.
- [How are teachers working hours linked to well being?](#)

### 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?](#) Thursday, 11 February 2021, [6.pm](#) to [8.pm](#)

## Theme 4: Inequality and community cohesion

### Key matters shared at the Virtual Governors Forum on 24 November:

**Work on equalities and anti-racism** is taking place in Hackney Education and across the education community. This work is crucial to ensure children feel like they belong in schools and everyone has equal opportunities to thrive.

#### *Eleanor Schooling CBE, Independent Chair of the Hackney Schools Group*

**Critical issues on racism and inequalities** were raised through the BLM movement this year. It also presented an opportunity to talk with parents and schools about issues of race. Parents of 6 volunteer schools were invited to talk about the topic of 'belonging' - From these discussions the themes that emerged from these conversations were;

**Curriculum:** Significant work has been carried out by Hackney Education on the curriculum including the launch of the Hackney Diverse Curriculum. In terms of the current curriculum in schools, parents raised the issue, children didn't understand why Black

History Month was celebrated or why it focussed on US history. Pupils should be taught stories of empowerment and focus on diverse books representing different backgrounds.

**Friendships** between children and different groups are important. It is also important to understand their development and go beyond being punitive when remarks are made around race. Outright racism was being punished in schools but other aspects of the conversation on race needed to be tackled; it is really important to find a way to talk rather than shut the conversation.

**Staff and role models:** Parents spoke about the importance of role models and people of colour as teachers so pupils could see a reflection of themselves in senior roles. It is important for governing bodies to consider why people of colour may choose not to apply to work in the school; important to be able to make sure black staff are welcomed.

**Language:** to discuss race must be direct. Parents want schools to listen to understand, not to respond.

**Perception:** Parents were conscious of how children of colour may be perceived and treated differently. They passed on the notion that children of colour would have to work harder to get the same recognition as their peers. Governors could ask the school if praises/ awards were fairly distributed among the pupils.

**Policy review:** Parents also asked the schools to review their policies and policy implementation to make sure it didn't disproportionately affect a group of pupils.

**Understanding different cultures:** How the heritage of families is recorded can also have its downside; being asked about it can make children feel like they are not as welcome as others. There is a lack of understanding of different cultures and cultural behaviours of parents. Some parents suggested unconscious bias training for parents would be helpful.

***Orlene Badu: Young Black Men Programme – System Leader:***

Hackney Education launched the **diverse curriculum** in October 2020 - there was a recognition that a diverse curriculum can have a positive impact through reduction of exclusion and enhancing the sense of belonging for pupils. The diverse curriculum is a nine-week lesson plan spanning from Early Years to KS3 and 4 students, and will further the teaching of Black history in Hackney and the UK. Designed by educators and features a series of modules which catalogue the contributions of Black people across the ages. The resources listed do not rest on the narrative of oppressiveness but focus on stories of empowerment. There are also 8 clear recommendations on what schools can do to empower Governors.

**Younger voices on governing boards** - an initiative be launched in the new year that is being developed in collaboration with ... :

***Shekeila Scarlett: Co-chair of Young Futures Commission*** - Under 1% governors are under the age of 30. The Young Futures Commission has been working on recommendations relevant to governors and governing boards. Young people's voices are valuable as they provide insight into their lived experience and understanding of emerging issues. They would effectively challenge practices for the betterment of pupils' experiences.

***Solomon Rose: Policy and Research Officer*** - Governors need to consider having a diversity of cultures and experience on their boards. Often the engagement with young people is tokenistic and work must be done to ensure engagement is meaningful. Having young people in leadership positions can make the environment better for children in schools.

**Relevant Announcements & Reports:**

- **Black people, racism and human rights:** House of Commons House of Lords Joint Committee on Human Rights, 4th November 2020
- **Diverse Governance Webinars:** a series of 6 webinars, register for a free [here](#).

### 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, 25 March 2021, 9-11am

## Theme 5: Financial management matters

### Relevant Announcements & Reports:

- **Covid workforce fund to support with costs of staff absences in schools and colleges**  
to reclaim costs incurred over the course of the current half term, if they meet the following conditions: [Financial status of the school](#) and [Staff Absence rates](#):
- **[The implications of Covid-19 on the school funding landscape](#)** –NFER research report on the extent to which mainstream primary and secondary schools in England will be able to meet the additional costs of Covid-19 through existing and additional government funding.
- **Catch up premium** to support their pupils to catch up for lost teaching over the previous months: [guidance](#) Schools are advised to draft a strategic plan and a short statement for their websites explaining how funding will be used to support pupils, and anticipated impact.
- **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme:** The government has extended the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) until 31 March 2021 [guidance](#) here

### Governor Training - hosted virtually:

- **[How do Governing Boards Make the Right Strategic Financial Choices for their School?](#)** Thursday, 11 March 2021, 9-11am

## 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 show how your school is being governed during 2020/21:
  - Full Governing Board 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 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.

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

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