

# Chair of Governors Update

1 July 2021

Dear Colleagues,

Throughout this academic year, the strengths in our Hackney education system have become clearly evident. It comes from the dedication, resilience and relentless hard work of our school leaders and staff as they skilfully navigate the continued challenges of this pandemic.

In planning for the coming year and beyond, the quality of education will remain our fundamental focus, in order to regain lost learning for all pupils. We will also need to give particular attention to our most disadvantaged learners. Many of them have wide-ranging challenges, such as poverty, being in care, SEN, suffering mental health, living within unsafe domestic and social communities. To do this, our school leaders will be depending on the support, challenge and encouragement that their Chairs, and governors have been providing in equal measures. In creating a legacy, we will wish to ensure that society harnesses the talents of all our children in Hackney.

Reflecting on our services over this past year, we are proud to have organised nine Governor Forums, with an average participation of 60-70 people and to have issued as many Chairs and Governors Updates, which you have told us were instrumental to you and your boards keeping informed in the midst of an evolving landscape. With colleagues, we have also delivered 27 training sessions to over 200 governors. We have constantly updated [A Roadmap for Continuing Strategic Governance in 2020/21](#) and offered termly [agenda templates](#) to reflect refining priorities. Our clerks have supported almost 400 governors meetings and panel hearings. In the coming year, forums and updates will continue, and we will be collaborating with [GovernorHub](#) and [The Key](#) to enhance our services for you. We will develop more bespoke resources, and an annual business planner giving clearer expectations of governor statutory and best practice responsibilities. We are also on a mission to [Get Hackney Youth Governing](#), to diversify our boards. It has been a genuine honour to support you during these difficult times and as always, we encourage you to get in touch if you have any query regarding governance, no matter how small.

On a final note, whether you be a football follower or a silent bystander like me, this week, the whole nation felt the pride of England's achievements. This came not just from talent, but from the determination of the whole team working together to achieve their very best. The success of our education system, also depends on the talents, determination and the strategic team efforts of governors, school leaders and staff. We know you are united and fearless in your approach, and you will always strive to give our children a future full of promise and success. For this, we are evermore appreciative.

We wish you an enjoyable end to the academic year and a restful summer break!

Sincerely,

**Maggie Kalnins**

**Leader of Governance Services**

## Key Matters Shared at the Virtual Governors Forum on 24 June 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 June, highlight relevant announcements and reports, and signpost training opportunities. Our Governance Training offer for 2021/22 is now included on pages 21 to 31 of this school [CPD training brochure](#).

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

#### Key Matters Shared at the Virtual Governors Forum: Hackney Context

**Covid-19 update:** We need to remain very aware as Hackney cases are currently at 85 per 100,000 inhabitants, compared to single figures 6-8 weeks ago. It is likely that figures will rise a bit more. The vaccine roll out and really low cases a few weeks ago might have given a false sense of security, but the Delta variant is even more infectious and **continued rigour around preventative measures** is essential.

Looking ahead to September, schools are expected to be fully operational with the possibility of bubbles continuing. Some schools have reflected on continuing aspects of the bubbles as they provided a calmer space (amongst other advantages identified), The **quality of teaching** remains essential as the fundamental drive for achievement, enjoyment and engagement for every child so this must remain high on the agenda. There continues to be the need for those who need some extra support.

The **quality of teaching and the curriculum** is critical, and whilst there are so many other things to think about, this needs to be at the centre for school leaders and Governors. Of relevance is governors having a good understanding of the **network of support available to vulnerable pupils**, including those with Pupil Premium, SEND or Social Care involvement. There is a whole range of early care information available that can support schools to have really good systems in place. (Slide 4)

**Networking** amongst schools is always positive, and Head teachers and Governors will be looking forward to seeing each other in person and visiting each other's schools. Governors should use the expertise of the **School Improvement Partner**, provided by Hackney Education, to provide support to the head teacher around improvements, and reports and input to Governors. (Slide 5)

Many head teachers and Governors who have been involved in the development groups for **Hackney Schools Group Board** found it a really helpful activity. The three focuses are **belonging, reading and curriculum**. Parents, children and staff have all been involved in work on belonging. Look out for more information about how to be involved with one of the groups made up of six schools and supported by an external person. (Slide 5)

In terms of **professional development** for staff teams, there is support staff working with vulnerable pupils or teachers. Teachers are often the best learners, always looking for better ways to teach particular topics or groups of pupils. Governors should think about and ask school leaders about available opportunities, including for leadership and management. There is an offer within Hackney Education but also a range of other offers locally and across London. (Slide 5)

Looking ahead, it is key for Hackney Education to embed the **ambitions of attainment and achievement for all pupils**. We will be working to support individual schools as

well as in a wider sense in terms of groups or phases of pupils, ensuring we are supporting the realisation of ambition for every child. We will continue our intensive work with schools that have an Ofsted judgment that requires improvement or below. In terms of the quality of school places we know that some schools face challenges with falling rolls for some primaries and there is a strategy being developed to look at how the school estate is managed.

Many schools already **extend the school day** with booster classes before and after school. Evidence suggests that it can have a positive impact on outcomes but only if it is delivered effectively, linked to school work and supported by staff, parents, and pupils because attendance and punctuality is critical.

We want **more local quality places for children with SEND**, contrary to the current situation where a higher proportion go to school out of the borough. Regarding a continued partnership with children with wellbeing needs, Hackney Education works closely with Children's Social Care, CAMHS and Young Hackney, Health Service and Police to make sure that individuals are well supported and that the **professional network available to vulnerable pupils is made clear to schools**.

We wanted to continue to make sure that equality and diversity are embedded in all areas and Hackney's new diverse curriculum is well known to Governors. In September a colleague will be joining Hackney Education to work with schools on further developing really strong **parent engagement**. The strengths of the Local Authority led education system must be highlighted and the partnership work is a real strength.

There are some **principles that make effective schools** and close the gap for disadvantaged children. These include a culture of aspiration; ambitious school leaders who really believe that all of the children in their school can achieve as well as any children nationally; training and development for classroom staff; and effective use of assessment. Staff are professionals who need nurturing and developing because schools that invest in that do really well in terms of delivering for children, and effective use of assessment identifies which children are behind and supports them to catch up.

**Honest and open self evaluation** also features in effective schools. Schools have worked incredibly hard in the last two years reorganising their curriculum model in response to the Ofsted inspection framework, which has produced a progressive, sequenced model of the curriculum that lays out the anticipated outcomes of each year group in relation to the national curriculum and most schools go beyond that.

**Teacher assessed grades** have now been submitted in secondary schools with the required evidence supplied.

**Examination boards** are also asking for evidence to be supplied, to moderate, check and quality assure.

Robust systems for grading must be in place to avoid having high numbers of **appeals**, so following process is key, and this should include access arrangements and reasonable adjustments for eligible pupils that require it. Governors can ask leaders what reasonable adjustments have been made, and about the arrangements for pupils that may have been disadvantaged during assessment. [GCQ guidance](#) outlines the appeals process. (Slide 20)

**Engagement with parents and carers is important**, and robust home learning programmes must ensure that learning continues beyond the school gate, and that parents continue to be active partners in their child's learning journey.

There is a **briefing on the school places and estate draft strategy on 13 July 2021 4.30pm** for head teachers and Governors and an invitation will be sent out for this.

**Ofsted** are in Hackney this week. They are not undertaking full inspections until September however they are undertaking Section 8 inspections, the framework is unchanged and they are still focused on the quality of education and curriculum, whilst there are some caveats in terms of Covid-19. (Slide 21)

Everyone's Invited website presents research **into records of sexual harassment incidents** that may aid governor questioning. Governors can ask leaders how they have responded to this research such as nearly 90% of girls and nearly 50% of boys said that they have been sent explicit pictures and videos that they did not want to see and that it happens frequently. (Slide 22)

**Reducing exclusions** is a complex issue involving the Behaviour Policy, the school culture, quality of teaching and how much children feel a sense of belonging. Exclusions are down significantly this year, beyond what we would expect to see given children were at home for 8 weeks. (Slide 25)

DfE has launched a new 3 year programme to improve pupil behaviour called **Behaviour Hubs**. This is targeted schools where there are significant behaviour problems, but almost without exception Hackney schools are calm and well ordered environments. The work that Hackney is doing around reducing exclusion is looking at a tiny minority. (Slide 26)

**Year 6 transition work** is being led by Helena Burke and Rachel Thompson. Information is being shared more openly in a trusted way between primary and secondary schools and offering support from the re-engagement unit in terms of vulnerable students moving from Year 6 to Year 7. Information sharing has made it possible to identify around 150 of the most vulnerable students and there has been best practice sharing.

For the first term this year **REU support began work with secondary colleagues** in a pilot and from September will be working with all secondary schools. This is a rapid response team which works with individual children identified by the school. They engage in systemic work via a team that includes a range of practitioners including teachers, with access to CAMHS and Early Help who will work with the school, parent and child. There has been great success avoiding exclusions with primary schools and the secondary schools in the pilot. (Slide 28)

We offer a range of **guidance, training and support for** governors, school administrators and clerks that focusing on **improving outcomes for those at risk of exclusion**, and what they should know before considering an exclusion and **professionalising the PDC process**, This includes producing an **Exclusions Summary Data Report** for each school that draws on CENSUS data, includes trend for National, London, Hackney and the individual school in context of: gender, ethnicity, SEND. We have also attached **Questions for Governors: Improving outcomes for pupils most at risk of being excluded: supporting informed discussions, contextualising challenges for pupils most at risk of exclusions, how the school ensures education benefits equally** (slide 30)

#### **Relevant Announcements & Reports**

- **The EEF has published the latest episode of their 'Evidence into Action' podcast, 'Exploring the complexities of reading comprehension'**.

- **Pupil learning loss – new research**: analysing learning loss experienced by primary and secondary pupils in England was published by the Department for Education
- **Regular testing - ways to encourage staff and pupils over 12 to test**. This letter is meant to help encourage parents and staff to continue testing twice weekly.
- **COVID-19- increasing absences puts pressure on schools**: School attendance data published by the Department for Education (DfE), data suggests that they increased from 1% on June 10, to 3% on June 17.
- Ofsted has published its **review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges**. Governors and trustees should ensure that they have a good understanding of **sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges** so that they can provide the right level of support and challenge for school leaders and designated safeguarding leads (DSLs).
- **Ofsted evaluation of Education Inspection Framework finds overall satisfaction**. found that deep dives 'allowed inspectors to understand the quality of education in their setting' and was considered valuable by leaders as it enabled 'joined- up' analysis.
- The DfE have released the **Academy Trust Handbook 2021** (Academies Financial Handbook) which comes into effect from September 2021 and **updated Model Articles of Association** for academy trusts.
- **Ofsted Subject Research Review: Geography**. And **two short video clips**.
- **Ofsted publishes a research review on mathematics education**:
- **DfE:Pupil Premium Plus post-16 pilot** is part of the government's work to support looked-after children and care leavers in general further education (FE) colleges

#### **Governor Training - hosted virtually:**

- 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:**

Summer support can really help when it focuses on children from disadvantaged families because of the learning loss over the six week break. Governors should **ensure that staff who are taking part are not having extensive demands placed on them** and that they have time to recover before the long autumn term.

**Core professional development and teacher training**, Governors should ask their leaders about the availability of frontline tuition and continual professional development for teachers and support staff.

#### **Relevant Announcements & Reports:**

- **Education staff wellbeing charter**: The DfE have worked with unions, schools and colleges and Mind to co-create a charter to highlight staff wellbeing in the education sector. More information can be found [here](#).

### **Theme 4: Inequality and community cohesion**

The pandemic has made us think about how we work in partnership to care for more **vulnerable groups**, more deeply affected and requiring more recovery time than others.

In the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd, the **Black Lives Matter** and wider movement has focused our work on embracing equality and inclusion and appreciating diversity. There has been great work done across Hackney schools. (Slide 3)

The Government has provided funding for technology for the digitally disadvantaged, however online learning is not always easy for younger children or those with special educational needs and schools have been really creative dealing with this. In the second lockdown it was incredible how schools had developed their **online offers** and this continues for bubbles that are sent home. (Slide 13)

Governors must consider what level of parent and staff engagement there is at their schools. **Recruitment and Retention and Development policies** for schools have been updated and they will be reviewed in terms of their impact as live documents and ask **to what extent the staff in schools reflect the very rich and mixed community of children** who attend them.

**Diversity and inclusion** data will be collected and analysed over the next few months in terms of the **make-up of governing boards and staff in schools** and this information will be shared in the autumn term. The current picture is a general idea as the detail is still being collected, however school governing bodies are not as diverse as they used to be and more needs to be done in relation to leadership roles. We will be looking for good examples from some schools to roll out as exemplars to create more debate and discussion with governing bodies. We will then look at further support and development. Some schools use succession planning to identify future leaders, however other models will be considered. Work on the diverse curriculum found that some leaders do not necessarily give a sense to some of their staff that they could be considered for leadership so various models of succession planning will be considered as well as greater ways to bring about more accessible and inclusive recruitment of governors which could include using less abbreviations. (Slide 34)

**Get Hackney Youth Governing**, first mentioned in January 2021, is now underway. Governance Services wrote to schools interested in participating in the pilot. The National Association for Governors did a survey last year and the ethnicity and age disparities are really interesting. This project aims to address this. Most of us are many years far removed from the lived experience of education. There has been significant interest expressed by younger people to be involved and they can be a new part in terms of diverse and inclusive recruitment. (Slide 35)

#### **Relevant Announcements & Reports:**

- Africa and its Diaspora in UK schools curricula: A survey is being conducted by the UK Parliamentary Committee overseeing the **independent inquiry into Africa and its Diaspora in UK School Curricula**.
- **Edurio's report, 'equality, diversity and inclusion among staff'** focuses on an overall commitment to EDI in schools as well as career progression, all of which are areas that all boards have an important role in. Governing boards are integral in ensuring a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion in their schools and trusts, through the decisions they make and the scrutiny and support they give, they can drive significant progress for leaders, staff and pupils.
- **'Forgotten' White working-class pupils let down by decades of neglect, MPs say**
- **Covid-19: impact on child poverty and on young people's education, health and wellbeing**
- **Lit in Colour: Diversity in Literature in English Schools** aims to support schools in the UK to make the teaching and learning of English literature more inclusive. This includes commissioning research to better understand barriers and possible solutions, as well as providing practical support including book donations, free teaching resources and more.

## Theme 5: Financial management matters

### Key Matters Shared at the Virtual Governors Forum:

Governors must look at how schools are using **catch up funding** and scrutinise plans, making sure that impact measures are clear and schools report back on them. Plans should be changeable, adaptable and responsive to the needs of the children, and also published on the school website. *(Slide 10)*

The EEF has published some useful guidance on catch up funding. A large number of Hackney schools are offering **summer support**, many focusing on the incoming Year 7 cohort.

### Relevant Announcements & Reports:

- **Pupil premium funding made available for children given temporary free school meals eligibility.**
- **New DfE guidance - Pupil premium: effective use and accountability:** As part of the pupil premium allocations and conditions of grant for 2021 to 2022, schools are now required to: demonstrate, from the next academic year, how their spending decisions are informed by research evidence (condition 7) and use the strategy statement templates to publish their pupil premium strategy (condition 8).
- **PE and sport premium for primary schools will continue for the 2021/22 academic year.** The updated guidance also confirms that any unspent grant from the current academic year can be carried forward. The 2020 to 2021 conditions of grant documents have been updated to reflect this.