

Chair of Governors Update

1 December 2022

Dear Colleagues,

As the end of Autumn term approaches, the joy of spending the festive period with our families and friends is shrouded by the unprecedented cost of living crisis. It evokes memories of the 'Winter of Discontent'. But it also invokes deep respect for our school leaders and staff. This crisis is touching everyone's lives, including the colleagues in our schools. Yet their endeavours to give our children a rich education *and* find ways to mitigate the impact of this hardship, continue with the utmost dedication.

In this update, which includes the [video](#), [slides](#) and headlines from last week's virtual forum, we touch on the impact of the cost of living crisis, along with other big issues currently facing our education system. We also share how [Hackney is supporting the community during the Cost of Living Crisis](#). We hope the announcements, reports and training opportunities within this update will keep these critical matters in your hearts and minds, and guide your crucial work in governing our schools.

During these exceptionally challenging times, it seems apt to listen to the messages of solidarity and togetherness enshrined in the song [You'll Never Walk Alone](#). We hope this tune brings hope as it resonates in our minds, that it unites our community and that it fuels our collective mission to improve the life chances of every child and young person in Hackney.

Wishing you all peace, joy and love during advent, the festive season and Hanukkah!

Sincerely,

Maggie Kalnins, Leader of Governance Services

The content:

Our updates provide summary headlines from our virtual forum, reference to other announcements and reports, and signposts to governor training. These are presented under 5 key themes:

- 1. Promoting Equalities: with focus on Equity, Diversity & Inclusion**
- 2. Enabling achievement**
- 3. Assuring provision for Pupils with SEND**
- 4. Sustainable school systems**
- 5. Safeguarding, wellbeing and pastoral provision**

Future Dates of Hackney Governors Virtual Forum (5 to 6:00pm):

- **Thursday 2nd February 2023**
- **Thursday 16th March 2023**
- **Thursday 18th May 2023**
- **Thursday 29th June 2023**

We remind you of our previous [Chair of Governors Updates and Tools](#), our [Governors Training Programme for 2022/23](#) and our [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.

Education Director's Update

Key Notes from Governors Forum

Paul Senior - Director of Education & Inclusion shared major issues currently facing the education system nationally and locally. These include :

Falling school rolls are not unique to Hackney, but they are affecting Hackney Schools. With a reduction of pupil numbers, there is inevitably a reduction in funding. Therefore, the Borough is working on an

education estate strategy. This will affect a very small number of schools, it may result in an amalgamation or closure. Conversations with Heads and Chairs of Governors are starting in January.

A process of assessment is still taking place to determine which schools may be affected. Our focus is firmly on maintaining the quality of the educational experience for those pupils who remain in a school which is due to close or merge with another school. These will particularly take into account the effect on SEN children. Impact assessments will be carried out to ensure that this happens. The earliest date for any change will be September 2024.

The Schools Bill has not made progress over past months. With 68 clauses already deleted the bill may be withdrawn altogether. Monthly meetings with officials at the DfE and updates will be shared with governors and leaders through relevant forums..

The Government has however issued a Green Paper on SEN (Special Educational Needs). The focus is on keeping children in mainstream schools. There is likely to be some additional funding. At Borough level, the SEN strategy is being developed. The SEN Partnership is being consulted, which includes heads of special schools, and other educational and medical professionals. It starts by looking at what can be achieved with existing resources. Work has also been commissioned from a nationally respected expert to examine funding for SEN. There is to be a conversation with special school heads about budgets on 1 December and a timeline for progress will then be established. See more details in under theme 3. *Assuring Provision for Pupils with SEND.*

Hackney schools are high performing and high functioning and our Children's Centres are also doing well. Hackney Education is regularly contacted by local education authorities seeking advice because Hackney is so well regarded by those who work in the education sector.

1. Promoting Equalities: with focus on Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

Relevant Announcements and Reports

Symposiums:

Last term, two symposiums were held at Mossbourne Community Academy and The City Academy. The conversations centred around anti-racism and SEND. Various speakers contributed along with staff from Hackney Education and Children & Families. The slides from the first evening are [here](#) and the second evening [here](#). Thank you to all of the governors who attended.

Inclusion Charter:

The process for creating the Secondary School Inclusion Charter is underway. This charter will seek to pierce a spotlight on two very important issues in our secondary schools and settings in Hackney: anti-racism and SEND. Keep an eye out for updates here as work around the charter progresses.

- [Pushed Out ; Left Out](#) - Girls Speak: Final report November 2022
- [UK ethnic minorities seeing sharp progress in education, but wages and wealth lag behind](#)
- [Preventing hair discrimination in schools](#) Equality and Human Rights Commission -Oct 2022
- [Guidance on provision for transgender pupils November 2022](#)

Governor Training - hosted virtually

- [Disadvantage 360: Widening the lens](#) - NGA webinar
- **Wednesday 8 February 23 17:00 - 18:30** [Introduction to Adulthood: strategic focus](#)

2. Enabling achievement

Relevant Announcements and Reports

- [Best start in life: a research review for early years](#) - Ofsted review
- [Unlocking the potential of early years data](#)
- ['Now the whole school is reading'](#) Ofsted research on struggling readers in secondary schools
- [Alternative provision for primary-age pupils in England](#): a long-term 'destination' or a 'temporary solution'? Ofsted report November 2022 -
- [Ofsted - What inspection reports of Outstanding Schools tell us](#)
- [NFER publishes National Tutoring Programme 2020/21 evaluation findings](#)
- [The Skills Imperative 2035](#): Long-run employment prospects for the UK NFER Headline report

Governor Training - hosted virtually

- Monday 6 March 17:00 - 19:00 - [What do Governors need to know about the Ofsted Inspection process?](#)

3. Assuring Provision for Pupils with SEND

Key Notes from Governors Forum

- Sharing SEND Data in Hackney
- Developing local SEND Provision
- Key questions for governors to ask about SEND provision in schools

Joe Wilson - Head of SEND shared a number of statistics about SEND as seen in slides 6-9 and forum video 25 minutes. Headlines include:

We have seen a fall in overall school rolls and an increase in the number of children with SEN and EHCPs (Education & Health Care Plans). Hackney has the 12th highest percentage of children and young people aged 0 -24 with an EHCP out of 151 local authorities. It has the second highest percentage of primary school children with an EHCP with one in 20 children in Hackney schools having an EHCP. It is expected that there will be an increase of another 400 EHCPs year on year until 2026.

In Hackney, 30.1% of EHCP requests made by a school are refused. This rate is high compared with the national average of 20%. Through restructure and increase in staffing, dealing with requests, delivery of EHCP plans within the timeframe has increased from 54% in October and is now nearer 60%. Whilst noting the delay is usually by three weeks, we also recognise there is still room for improvement.

Around 400 Hackney children with EHCPs are educated in independent schools. Children with EHCPs are doing well in terms of outcomes as measured by the statistics slide 8). However, attainment 8 scores in English and maths are less strong. There is also a high level of suspensions of pupils with SEND - Hackney is 146th out of 151 local authorities on this measure. This is almost entirely at secondary level (slide 9). The number of suspensions at primary schools and special schools is notably low. Attendance is good. The proportion of young people with EHCP in work or training is also higher than the national average, but lower than in neighbouring areas.

These statistics, and in particular the likely growth in demand, have informed a strategy with three elements (slide 10, video forum video 31 minutes):

Phase 1A- addressing the need to offer places for Autism Resourced Provision (ARP) and Severe Learning Disability (SLD)

Phase 1 B: A feasibility studies underway to review sites and costs against estimates, and identify appropriate schools across to provide: Early Years, Primary and Secondary

- speech language and communications needs at primary level
- social and emotional mental health needs at secondary level
- moderate learning difficulties at secondary level
- complex needs at early years level.

Phase 2: Expansion of special schools

In Hackney, the high level of EHCP and SEN is partly linked to high levels of deprivation. During Covid, the checks which identified particular needs did not take place to the same extent as they had previously. This led to a backlog of cases. Furthermore, we have a high level at 30 % of children coming for assessment under 5 years old.

A joint strategic needs assessment is being undertaken with the public health analyst. This will identify the prevalence of SEN in the Borough and consider how participation in mainstream education could be encouraged. It will also consider whether there is an increase in the number of cases of autism and those needing speech and language support.

The financial settlement for 2023/24 will be really challenging, especially in the light of falling rolls. Hackney has an overspend of £5m and a cumulative debt of £18m. We are part of the DfE Better Value programme, aiming to balance the budget within a specified timescale.

[Key questions for governors to ask about SEND provision in schools](#) are referenced on slide 11.

Relevant Announcements and Reports

- [Schools need more specialist help for primary age children with additional needs](#) - New Ofsted research, published today, finds a lack of access to specialist help means more primary school children with additional needs are being referred to alternative provision
- [UK Disability History Month](#) with the theme of Disability, Health and Well-Being - 16 November to 16 December. - creates a platform to focus on the history of disabled people's struggle for equality and human rights.

Governor Training - hosted virtually

- **Governors for Schools Conference 2022 -What does the SEND review mean for your school?** - [Watch the recording and Session slides](#)
- **28th March 2023 17:00 - 19:00** [How do we ensure an inclusive approach for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\)](#)

4. Sustainable School Systems

Key Notes from Governors Forum

- Sustaining quality education & balanced budgets
- Addressing the impact/ risks of inflation/ energy costs; staff pay; cost of school meals/ uniform; interventions

Sajeed Patni - Head of Children and Education Finance, shared a number of key headlines as referenced in slides 14 to 19 and the forum video 41 minutes. Headlines include:

Schools are financially sustainable when they successfully provide a good quality education to all their pupils within the income that they receive. This needs to apply over the medium to long term- for about three to five years.

The key financial challenges currently facing schools are featured on (slide 15).

- Lack of inflationary increases
- Energy costs
- Low pupil numbers / falling rolls
- Non-funded pay increases
- Impact of Covid continues - staff cover; interventions for catch up etc
- Financial pressures on local government resulting in reduced support services for children and young people
- Cost of living crisis for pupils and families - have to consider, school meal costs for paying pupils, Uniforms etc.

The recent autumn statement provides for £2.3 billion being provided to support education over the next two financial years. It is not yet known how it will be allocated.

Inflation is another challenge. Energy is a large factor in this. Many schools buy energy through the Borough's Energy Management Unit. This provides savings but prices have still risen.

Falling rolls lead to less money being paid to schools. There have been non funded pay increases for teachers of 5 – 8.9 %. Many schools budgeted for 2- 2.5 %.

Covid is still having an impact if staff are on sick leave or isolating. Agency staff to provide cover can be expensive.

There has also been an impact on local government spending generally, which could have a consequential effect on local authorities' ability to support schools. However, there is the danger that reducing expenditure can have unexpected consequences. The cost of living crisis means for instance that increasing prices for school meals would place a strain on parents' budgets.

The governing board has a legal obligation to set an annual budget plan (slide 16, forum video 47 minutes), to ensure it is managed effectively, to make strategic decisions on how the delegated budget should be spent and to report back to provide assurance that it is being properly managed. It needs to consider mitigating action where appropriate.

The School Development Plan (SDP) needs to be linked with the budget. Any actions in the SDP will have resource implications. Governors need to consider value for money throughout. They also need to think about the need to promote equality and how this can affect spending decisions.

It is helpful for schools to maintain a contracts register. Governors can ask about any contracts that are about to expire as part of regular budget monitoring. There will often be a spending threshold above which there needs to be governor approval (video forum 52 minutes). The Borough can also help with procurement e.g. for school meals.

Relevant Announcements and Reports

- [Hackney Education Sufficiency & Estates Strategy](#) - slide addresses 4 priorities
- Marisa Childs has been appointed as the new [Chair of Hackney Schools Group Board](#). Marisa, a local resident and school governor in Hackney for many years instigated much of the work on [Listening to Parents and Carers Talking about Race](#).
- **Tackling food poverty - Tuesday, 13 December, 3pm to 4.30pm, at the Tomlinson Centre** -, we invite school governors and leaders to this summit looking into options for addressing food poverty in school. The purpose is to share how various organisations tackle food poverty in schools, explore challenges and seek your input in considering recommendations.
- School/Setting Business Continuity [briefing note for schools](#) provides advice and guidance
- [Mindful Exclusion](#): Further insights on effective governance in uncertain times
- [Understanding what makes some schools stressful places to work](#)
- [The priorities and challenges facing our schools NGA 2022](#)
- [The right people around the table](#) - NGA guide to recruiting and retaining school governors and trustees
- [Current estimates of school funding pressures](#) - EPI report October 2022

Governor Training - hosted virtually

- **Governors for Schools Conference 2022 - Good governance in 2022** [Watch the recording and Session slides](#)
- **Thursday, 19 January, 17:00 to 19:00** [How to make the right strategic financial choices for your school?](#)
- **Wednesday 1 February, 09:00 - 11:00** [How do Governors fulfil their professional and ethical responsibility?](#)
- **Thursday 9 February, 17:00 - 19:00** [Staff welfare, morale and workload: how do schools create excellent workplaces with a diverse workforce?](#)
- **Wednesday 1 March, 17:00 - 19:00** [How does the Chair of Governors shape strong governance and what is distinct about this role?](#)
- **Wednesday 15 March, 09:00 - 11:00** [How do you strategically assess and manage risks in your schools?](#)

5. Safeguarding, Wellbeing and Pastoral Provision

Relevant Announcements and Reports

- [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(KCSIE \) 2022](#) - **key headlines to note:**
Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure there are appropriate policies and procedures in place in order for appropriate action to be taken in a timely manner to safeguard and promote children's welfare. This includes the needs of individual children and peer groups. KCSIE further extends guidance on safeguarding specific issues including child on child abuse (Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Criminal Exploitation), alongside harmful sexual behaviour and sexual harassment. The document also includes additional information regarding low level concerns about staff members that would not reach LADO threshold and those children looked after by the local authority.

KCSIE is also advising that schools consider carrying out online searches for shortlisted candidates. We advise you to also conduct a search when considering potential governors. Hackney Education Guidance on pre-appointment vetting checks and an online search template to reflect the DfE guidance.

Governors board must ensure these responsibilities are fulfilled - by ensuring all governors have up to date training, that a broad member holds the responsibility of Safeguarding lead governors and that school leaders provide regular (annual) reports to the full board to enable robust governance of safeguarding systems.

[Local guidance and information can be found on these Hackney Education's safeguarding webpages](#). Additionally, [The City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership](#) also provides guidance and information on the local picture and safeguarding arrangements.

- **[Suspensions and exclusions](#) - key headlines to note:**
Permanent exclusions in 2021/22 rose again compared to a low of just six in 2020/21, though they remain below pre-pandemic rates. There were no permanent exclusions from primary schools. Increasingly permanent exclusions are for one-off serious incidents such as physical assaults, possession of a weapon, sexual misconduct, etc. These accounted for two-thirds of permanent exclusions in 21/22 with persistent disruptive behaviour accounting for one third. That ratio has continued this year. Children from Black ethnic backgrounds continue to be disproportionately permanently excluded. The majority of permanent exclusions were of children in Key Stage 3. An emerging issue last year was the increasing number of girls who were permanently excluded. They accounted for 50% of permanent exclusions last year.
- **[School attendance](#) - key headlines to note:**
New DfE guidance on school attendance in place from September 2022 sets out new duties and responsibilities on schools, governing bodies, academy trusts and local authorities. This includes a requirement for all schools to have an attendance policy setting out how they respond to pupil absence.
Absence levels in Hackney and nationally are higher with greater numbers of persistent and severely absent children in our schools compared to pre-pandemic. Primary school attendance in Hackney is currently 94.9% (which is the same as London and England), secondary school attendance in Hackney is currently 92.9% (which is better than England at 92.3% but worse than London at 93.4%) and special school attendance in Hackney is currently 88.4% (which is better than both London and England, which are 87.6% and 88.2% respectively).
- **[Ofsted Focused visit to Hackney children's services](#)**
- **[Hidden in Plain Sight: A national plan of action to support vulnerable teenagers to succeed and to protect them from adversity, exploitation and harm](#)**.
- **[Out of sight and out of mind](#)** - shining a spotlight on home education in England -Nov 2022

Governor Training - hosted virtually

- **[The governance of Safeguarding](#) NGA webinar**
- **Governors for Schools Conference 2022: Safeguarding: Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022** [Watch the recording](#) and [Session slides](#)
- **Wednesday, 07 December, 17:00 to 19:00** [How do we safeguard our children including those from Black, Asian and Minoritised Ethnic communities?](#)
- **Tuesday 14 March, 17:00 - 19:00** - [How do we safeguard our children including those from Black, Asian and Minoritised Ethnic communities?](#)
- **Wednesday 29 March 09:00 - 11:00** - [How can we improve the outcomes for those children most at risk of exclusion?](#)