

Chair of Governors Update

12 October 2023

Dear Colleagues,

We were delighted to see our governor community at our forum last week. We were also pleased that many of our governors were able to engage in the events offered last week at the thought provoking [Anti-racist Summit](#).

At the time, we did not anticipate the emerging news about the violence in Israel and Gaza, with human tragedy and ongoing uncertainty. These actions have personally affected many of our colleagues, pupils and families and we are holding a special place in our thoughts for all those who are directly and indirectly affected.

We all share a sense of pride in belonging to the welcoming and richly diverse community of Hackney. We also recognise the role that governors and leaders play to address any forms of oppression, to support our Hackney community, and retain this strength of solidarity during times of exceptional challenge.

I opened the forum last week, reflecting on the importance of governance within the education ecosystem and shared this quote by Sam Henson as featured in the [NGA Annual governance survey 2023](#):

'The voice of governors and trustees is a powerful thing. As architects of vision and strategy, and key decision makers for schools and trusts, governing boards occupy a unique vantage point. They present a perspective on the local educational context that has often been overlooked in sector debates.'

We wish to thank you, especially in these challenging times, for offering your unique vantage point and giving your courageous and generous leadership as governors. We recognise the critical role you play in keeping the Hackney education ecosystem together, and in steering the work of our school system so we can give the very best to our children, our staff and our families.

Sincerely,

Maggie Kalnins, Leader of Governance Services

The content:

This update provides a summary of headlines from our Extended forum for Chairs of Governors - which took place at Hackney Town Hall, 5pm to 6.30pm on Thursday 5th October. The event focused on the following key area:

- Reflecting on successes from last year
- Education Strategy for 2030
- A deeper focus on our key developments
- Sharing Headlines/ best practice from our chairs and leader
- Highlight of training and support for governors
- (The [slide deck](#) from last week's event)

Future Dates of Hackney Governors Forums for 2023/24 starting at 5.00pm:

- Thursday 23 November 2023
- Thursday 1 February 2024
- Thursday 14 March 2024
- Thursday 23 May 2024

- Thursday 27 June 2024 - **Governors Annual Conference**

We also remind you of our previous [updates and tools](#), our [Governors' Training Programme 23/24](#) 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.

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Cllr Anntoinette Bramble - Statutory Deputy Mayor

Headline Notes:

- Governors have more power than they sometimes realise on matters such as exclusions, attendance and influencing the culture and ethos of the school.
- We are proud of the results and successes from schools this year. GCSE & A level students did phenomenally well in Hackney and results are above the national average. The aim is for Hackney schools to turn out well rounded individuals who have been exposed to a variety of positive experiences.
- The council is considering the closure or merger of six schools. This is no reflection on the schools but a result of factors beyond their (or the council's) control. Since the Child Q case there has not been an invasive strip search of a child in Hackney. All those who protested against Police action may have contributed to this.
- The role of governors in providing effective challenge and support for the schools is crucial.

REFLECTING ON SUCCESSES FROM LAST YEAR**Headline Notes:****Primary Data:**

- Our fantastic primary results have meant that we are 4th best in the country. Chelsea & Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea, Hammersmith are the only boroughs ahead of us nationally.
- Consistency across all areas. Nursery & EY have outperformed nationally with their development. Maintained nurseries outperformed private nurseries. 70% of Early Years children have met good levels of development
- 84% of Hackney Year 1 passed their phonics screening. Interventions to plug the gaps are being put in place.
- KS1 SATs are not longer mandatory and schools can choose whether to implement or not
- Exposure to wider curriculum has shaped the results for greater depths
- KS2 - Hackney outcomes are 20% above national and maths saw the biggest area of improvement.
- Hackney outcomes across the board were better than national
- We saw twice the national outcome in Higher Standard, which is brilliant as lots of inference skills are needed to understand and respond to questions
- Some transition work between primary and secondary is suggested - schools come together to have discussions so that children continue to excel or receive support needed

Secondary Data:

- In line with 2019, over 25% of children received a distinction or distinction* grade
- Students got their university choices or went on to carry out an apprenticeship
- Not quite back to where we were pre-covid, but moving in the right direction.
- Key priorities have been supporting the underperforming students. Funding an intervention stage which will be extended to schools
- WTS - working towards standard
- Dig deep into the data, ask about the different groups and SEND pupils when analysing these results and probe.
- Governors may wish to select a small sample of children underperforming children, and track their progress throughout the year. This will help Governors to understand if schools are using a wraparound system and ensure that schools are connecting with families to support.

See [slides 8 - 22](#)

EDUCATION STRATEGY FOR 2030
Sheila Makokha, Education 2030 Strategy Programme Manager

Headline Notes:

- This strategy was developed with key officers (including governors and headteachers) to create a 7 year strategy. This is kept high level so it does not date. It focuses on 5 key priorities.
- Each priority is linked to a list of actions which is then used to shape bigger goals. Currently working on what our “successes” and milestones will look like.
- This strategy is due to launch on 30th January, with provisional approval at the January 2024 SLG. Consultation timeline had to be paused due to the Mayoral Election.
- Maintained nursery schools and special schools to be added to the list of interest groups

See [slides 24 to 27](#)

SCHOOL ESTATES STRATEGY PROGRAMME

David Court - Interim Assistant Director, School Estate Strategy

Headline Notes:

- Cabinet has decided to begin formal consultation to close or amalgamate six schools in Hackney with a 28 day representation period leading to a final decision in December. Cabinet has agreed to formally begin statutory mechanisms with closing schools.
- The amount of children in attendance at a school directly affects the amount of funding received. With falling rolls, more and more schools are struggling, due to a range of reasons such as Brexit, cost of living, rise in the number of SEN children in Hackney, (who very much need and deserve support). However many factors lead to increased financial pressure for schools.
- Very serious programme of work including staff, leaders, governors, and schools, which will have a huge impact on staff, teachers, families and the community
- The Estates team is developing a programme of support to help mitigate and minimise disruption. Beginning discussions with families now, so that they will have a full range of options. Asking parents to indicate their preferences. Beginning dialogue with parents now and we are intending to use the same mechanism as the year 6 to 7 transitioning system
- There is a staff support package for teachers' mental health and wellbeing, and professional development. Funded CPD package to work CVs and to help staff at schools understand what happens with their pensions, benefits and redundancy payments
- Additional SEND, HR and officers are being recruited to ensure that the Estates programme is carried out robustly with maximum support.
- There is a falling rolls watchlist, to monitor schools and see what is impacting financial viability. Early discussions to prevent schools moving into debt or further deficit. Working with schools to keep them financially viable. Further proposals brought forward for preventative action. Introducing a working group, for key stakeholders. Not proposing to make any further school closures until Dec 2024 at the earliest.
- For Governors' Attention: On 6 October the Council published proposals on the discontinuance and/or amalgamation of 6 primary schools. The representation period has started and will end on 3 November. Any person may comment or object to the proposals. The Statutory notices and full proposals for all affected schools can be found on the Council's [consultation](#) page.

See [slides](#) 29 to 35

CHILDREN AND FAMILY HUBS PROGRAMME

Donna Thomas - Assistant Director, Early Years, Early Help & Wellbeing

Headline Notes:

- Free entitlement expansion next year for all 2 year olds whether their parents are working.
- Starting to think about how they can expand their Early Years so that they can increase their viability
- Development of Family Hubs, which provide Early Help when needed. All behaviour is telling us something and allows us to intervene much earlier if we understand it.
- This will provide heightened levels of connectedness in the community. We are very service rich in Hackney and this will allow families to understand what support they can access and where to get it from. This gives parents power to support without having to come into a system. Working in collaboration with families.

- One school is providing a home school liaison themselves. This will help us to prevent behaviour and concerns escalating and provide earlier interventions and support.
- While Young Hackney is for older children, the hubs allow primary aged children to get the support that they need early.

See [slides 36 to 40](#)

POST 16 OFFER/ PROGRAMME Anya James - Senior Adviser - Post-16

Headline Notes:

- This offer now covers ages 14 to 19
- Across 27 network forums. We encourage Governors to support and celebrate this. This has been shared with all heads of 6th form - similar for careers and progression
- Team is involved in subject network meetings about schools we have in the borough
- We have an in-house resource area to support teachers and subjects. Our student leadership programme hosts a Student Leadership Forum where students come together and share best practice and their own experiences and knowledge.
- Post 16 conference is held and students are able to support one another. We were shocked to find out that 2000 post-16 residents leave the borough each year. When we asked parents and students why, they alluded to a lack of signposting, lack of knowledge and negative reputations of provisions. Project Hackney has created a list of all schools and courses that are available detailing what students can move onto after GCSEs
- This provides an opportunity for them to choose a good place that works for them within the borough.

See [slides 41 to 46](#)

SEND Update Joe Wilson - Interim Assistant Director, Send and Inclusion

Headline Notes:

Due to illness, we were unable to hear from the SEND team on the day, but please see attached in depth slides regarding the SEND Local Area Joint Inspection.

See [slides 47 to 64](#)

SHARING HEADLINES/ BEST PRACTICE FROM OUR CHAIRS AND LEADERS Lisa Clarke & Sam Calver (Head Teacher and Chair of Governors, Comet Nursery School & Children's Centre)

Headline Notes:

- Comet is an outstanding nursery school and is always looking for ways to improve practice. This includes challenging dominant narrative in education
- The team looked at the communication of children with special needs, at the start of learning their language. Comet nursery looked at how support was provided for them to communicate. Learning their micro expressions, such as slight movements of their chest. They were able to research how children felt, their sense of belonging and their identity.
- Comet have flipped the narrative and adopted a strength-based approach. Using what children can do and are doing, and have taught staff to better support. Staff feel really engaged and empowered, children have benefited because staff have been

upskilled. The programme is being extended as a school development plan for school.

- They are truly tapping into what children are learning and what they love and celebrating what they can do. The team presented at the EECERA conference in Lisbon this summer and have been asked to write articles to be shared internationally.

GOVERNING BOARD AUTUMN AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS

People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider diversity on the board, succession planning, terms of office • Elect your chair and vice-chair • Consider conflicts of interests and transparency / fill out declarations • Review committees and link governor roles • Conduct skills and lived experience audit and set up training for the year
Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the school improvement plan • Balance short term and long-term objectives • Headteacher's performance review
Regulatory Changes and Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding: check compliance with and understanding of updated guidance • UK GDPR update
Crisis Management & Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the cost-of-living crisis, impact on all stakeholders, and mitigation measures • Scrutinise teachers' pay recommendations
Stakeholder Engagement & Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan, identify stakeholders and engagement activities, monitor participation and effectiveness, update complaints policy and training

RELEVANT ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REPORTS

Headline Notes:

Promoting Equalities

- [Building an anti-racist classroom](#)
- [Race and Leadership Roles in Schools – My Story \(Patrick Cozier Original Edit\)](#)
- [Ethnicity and additional needs in the pandemic: Additional provision for EAL, ethnicity and attainment \(3\)](#)
- ['THERE IS ONLY SO MUCH WE CAN DO' - SCHOOL STAFF IN ENGLAND](#)
- [What protects people from very deep poverty, and what makes it more likely?](#)
- [Interim Report launch: A new framework for tackling poverty](#)
- [Racism 'the biggest barrier to achievement' in education](#)

Enabling Achievement

- [When will my school be inspected?](#)
- [How to Beat a Cost-of-Learning Crisis: Universities' Support for Students](#)

- [Oct Education resources - part 2](#)

Assuring Provision for Pupils with SEND

- [Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools](#)

Sustainable School System

- [The decline in spending on school buildings](#)
- [Cost-of-living crisis: Impact on schools](#)
- [Early years spending update: Budget reforms and beyond](#)

Safeguarding and Pastoral Provision

- [Thousands more pupils to receive support to improve attendance](#)
- [Childhood in care raises risk of entering English youth justice system eightfold](#)
- [Persistent absence and support for disadvantaged pupils](#)

Hackney Education | Services for Schools | Reading Lane | London E8 1GQ
020 8820 7566 | s4s@hackney.gov.uk | hackneyservicesforschools.co.uk