

Chair of Governors Update

2 December 2021

Dear colleagues,

The emerging news about Omicron brought an extra chill this week, reminding us that we are still living through a pandemic. But it also evoked the warmest admiration for our school leaders and staff, who continue in their relentless endeavours to provide a rich education in school whilst keeping children and colleagues safe.

Within this edition we share key messages from last week's forum, which focus on how schools strategically invest to secure high quality education. We also consider how we promote equalities and anti-racism, with attention to exclusions and engagement with parent communities. We hope these insights, captured in the **video** and **slides**, and notes within this update will guide governors in supporting your schools right now. We also hope it will help to steer your strategic plans, particularly focusing on our disadvantaged youth, who continue to be most affected by these extraordinary times.

We remind you of our **previous updates and tools**, our **spring and summer training programme** 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.

On a final note, we know throughout this term children and staff have shared stories about how schools have adapted and continue to motivate and inspire everyone despite the many challenges. Listen carefully to these stories and enjoy the warmest reminder of why the work each of you do is so important to create a better society for all!

We wish all of you peace, joy and love during this holiday of Hanukkah and festive season as the year closes.

Sincerely,

Maggie Kalnins, Leader of Governance Services

The content:

- Quality Education and high achievement for all
- Promoting Equalities and anti racism
- Systems and Support: Governance advice, information and training to support key systems:
 - *SEND & inclusion; including reducing exclusions*
 - *Engagement with parents*
 - *Well being, health and safety of students and/or staff;*
 - *Safeguarding*
 - *Recruitment, development and retention of staff*
 - *Strategic business/ financial planning and risk management*
 - *Effective collaboration with the Hackney family of schools and key partners*

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

- Thursday 27th January 2022
- Thursday 17th March 2022
- Thursday 5th May 2022
- Thursday 30th June 2022

Governors Training Programme for [Spring](#) and [Summer](#)

Quality Education and high achievement for all

Key Notes From Governors Forum

(Forum Video: 01:38 - 02:47) Every single school, setting and service plays a part in providing a highly **ambitious and inclusive education** for every child, recognising that for some children this may include a specialist provision. Over the last two years this focus has sometimes been in the background as we delath Covid, and whilst now it feels like more settled times, there is still uncertainty, increased absence and the risk of Covid making children and adults quite ill.

(Forum Video: 02:47 - 03:57) Its ambitious **and inclusive education** has been a key focus of **Ofsted inspections** this term. They expect to see an inclusive **curriculum** that ensures children have the full breadth of the core subjects and beyond. Governors are encourage to listen to children talk about their learning experiences, as do Inspectors, to better understand their schools

(Forum Video: 07:34 - 08:26) **Hackney has** less school aged children compared with five years ago. As such, the **roll numbers are dropping** in some schools, who are moved to operate as one rather than two form entry. Hackney Education can support schools with managing this change. We share more information in the section Promoting equalities and anti-racism.

(Forum Video: 13:25 - 14:25) Ensuring there is **sufficient leadership capacity** and the right **SEND** provision are key Educational risks for schools. Finding and keeping great leaders is not always easy, but ensuring that the structures allow for being able to afford them is really helpful. Classroom support for both SEND and disadvantaged pupils can be negatively impacted by budget restraints. **Pressure on classroom resources** needs to be factored into budgets. Budget restraints can impact on **broader curriculum activity** such as providing specialist music in language teaching and trips which support specialisms that enable schools to have a broader, richer curriculum offer which is wanted for all pupils.

(Forum Video: 14:25 - 16:02) **Curriculum structures** are being considered where there is a reduction in pupil numbers or non specialist teachers are delivering subjects, in terms of the impact on pupils and curriculum design. Some schools are having vertically grouped, mixed year classes, where the curriculum is being delivered in a cycle which has complications in terms of pupils gaining knowledge progressively over time. **Slide 9** All of these things provide **risk of wider variance in schools' offers**. More financially comfortable schools can provide more in terms of the curriculum than those less comfortable, unless the situation is managed really carefully, and we are mindful that this could extend an already present disadvantage.

Relevant Announcements and Reports

- **Understanding Progress in the 2020/21 Academic Year Findings from the summer term and summary of all previous findings October 2021**
- **Ofsted accelerates inspections for schools and further education providers by 2025**
- **Technology and education: the opportunities, the challenges, and the role of governors.**
- **Impact of school closures and subsequent support strategies on attainment and socio-emotional wellbeing in Key Stage 1: Interim Paper 2**
- **The Pupil Premium and the Importance of Using Evidence:**
- **Enriching Education Recovery - The role of non-formal learning and extra-curricular activities**
- **1988-2021: How Seventeen Secretaries of State for Education, through Thirty Years of Constant Change, Enabled the System to Improve**
- **Councils in England report 34% rise in elective home education:**
- **The Education Hub - DfE site that captures all you need to know about the education system**

Governor Training - hosted virtually

The Foundations of Strong Governance: Step 1: Introduction How do Governors Fulfil their Professional and Ethical Responsibility? Wednesday, 2 February 2022:9:00 – 11:00am

The Foundations of Strong Governance: Step 4. How does the Chair of Governors Shape Strong Governance and what is Distinct about their Role? Wednesday, 2 March 2022:5:00 – 7:00pm

What do Governors Need to Know about the Ofsted Inspection Process? Monday, 7 March 2022, 5pm to 7pm

Promoting equalities and anti-racism

Key Notes From Governors Forum

(Forum Video 04:14 - 05:27) Addressing equalities and anti-racism is a shared value and crucial work for Hackney. Formal results at the end of key stages show **disproportionate outcomes** for some groups. We want to see every child achieve. Any **groups that have historically under-achieved should be pro-actively monitored by governors** to make sure learning gaps are closed and no child gets left behind. Hackney's underachieving groups have been **Black Caribbean** children, **particularly boys** more at secondary level than primary, and at times **Turkish Kurdish Cypriot** children, sometimes children in receipt of **additional support or Pupil Premium** grants.

(Forum Video: 26:11 - 28:38) Hackney exclusion data reveals that a **boy from a Black Caribbean background, on free school meals and with special educational needs, has a significantly higher chances of being excluded** from school either permanently or for a fixed term, than a girl from a White British background who is not on free school meals and does not have special educational needs. **These four elements combined rapidly increase the risk of exclusion.** These differentials apply to fixed term and permanent exclusions, with the same significant multipliers around the vulnerability factors that accelerate a child's risk of exclusion. This stark data is not unique to Hackney and reflected across the country. However, **Hackney's exclusion rates remain very high compared to other boroughs.** Schools work hard to prevent exclusions and support vulnerable pupils around these risk factors but ultimately the data is showing a story. **This is an equality issue** that needs to be challenged to understand why and how it can be resolved. The breakdown of this data is illustrated **Slides 22 & 23**

(Forum Video: 28:39 - 30:00) The **Timpson Review (2019)** shows the reasons **why some children are more likely to be excluded** than others are due to interwoven factors. This includes **in school factors** such as policy and practice in schools (for example, SEND and behaviour policy), and wider school systems such as behavioural support, alternative provision and fair access. **Out of school factors** include poverty, substance misuse and individual child and family circumstances including trauma. These intersectionalities of issues can lead to some children being more vulnerable to exclusion than others. Governors need to be aware of that bigger picture and **ensure that school system support rather than exacerbates issues.** Governors must consider the issues around race, poverty, special educational needs and gender within school exclusion statistics. **Slide 24**

(Forum Video: 30:01 - 33:16) The **Equality Act (2010)** and **Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)** applies to all public bodies including mainstream schools and academies. **DfE provides guidance for schools around the PSED.** The three main elements require due regard in terms of **eliminating discrimination, advancing equality** of opportunity and **fostering good relations** across all characteristics. Main areas where there is **significant disproportionality are around race, gender and special educational needs,** which means that those pupils are protected under the disability requirements of the Equality Act (2010). The impact of poverty on long term outcomes is well known. **Slide 25 and 26 and Exclusions Data for Governors**

(Forum Video: 33:18 - 36:59) In reviewing or creating policies, particularly those relating to vulnerable children, possible equality impact should be considered at the development stage to ensure that it is positive rather than negative. The implementation and impact of these policies should then be monitored **school leaders and governors, assessing the impact on** those with protected characteristics, to fully **promote and advance equality by eliminating discrimination and disproportionality.** **Slide 27 .** We have also shared additional **Exclusions and Equalities data** requested during the forum.

Relevant Announcements and Reports

- **In conversation with Hashi Mohamed – From child refugee to top barrister**
- **Zahawi calls on schools to increase diversity of governors:**
- **Education Committee report on 'left behind' white working class pupils**
- **Lessons from Lewisham by Will Millard Pledge to tackle race inequalities in education**

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? Tuesday, 22 March 2022:9:00 – 11:00am

Tackling inequalities: Hackney Young Black Men Initiative – understanding Cultural Competency, Racial Identity and Unconscious Bias Wednesday 27 April 2022, 5pm - 7pm

Systems and Support: Governance advice, information and training to support key systems:

SEND & Inclusion; including reducing exclusions

Key Notes From Governors Forum

(Forum Video: 05:27 - 07:34) The numbers of **Children with SEND / EHCP** are increasing across Hackney, while those with SEND support levels are slightly decreasing, indicating **more complex expressions of SEND in children**. This is changing what is happening in classes. Schools are rightly prioritising developing their SEND provision **and teachers are becoming increasingly skilled at teaching the wide range of learners**. Children who need additional adults is an area for consideration. **More in borough provision for children with complex needs is also being sought**, by extending the resource or special schools, thus enabling children to receive local specialist provision.

Key notes on **reducing exclusions** are referenced in the section above - **Promoting equalities and anti-racism**.

Relevant Announcements and Reports

- **Promoting equality and inclusion for early years children with SEND**
- Letter to Schools - **Scrutiny Exclusions Report** - 26 Nov 2021 attached
- **Outcome of School Exclusions in Hackney**: Deputy Mayor Bramble responds to Scrutiny report

Governor Training - hosted virtually

Tackling Inequalities: How do Governors Ensure an Inclusive Approach for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities? Tuesday, 29 March 2022 5:00 – 7:00pm

Engagement with parents

Key Notes From Governors Forum

(Forum Video: 37:50 - 38:26) All schools must endeavour to ensure all parents feel able to be **involved and participate in their child's learning**. This is more straightforward when there are two parents in the same household, who are familiar with the UK education and have been successful themselves. This is a **critical time for schools to re-ignite and re-engage with parents** due to lost learning and students sitting weighty exams. Parents need to be informed and brought along the journey. Debra Robinson is working with schools to develop engagement initiatives, particularly with those parents who have struggled to feel involved and welcomed by their schools. **Slide 29**

(Forum video: 38:26 - 39:57) Headline of comments and concerns from the **Parents as Partners conference**, included **mental health, transition, SEND, Exclusions, lessons post-Covid, pupil voice and working with partners/engagement/voice**. The conference was successful, and parents were articulate and engaging. **Slide 30**

(Forum Video: 40:01 - 42:56) Parent engagement is known to have a positive impact on student progress. For younger pupils, this includes joining school trips, classroom reading and after school activities. As students get older parental engagement is crucial, and defined more by parents' understanding of the curriculum, structures and their provision of home learning equipment. **School engagement should focus more on allowing the parents to connect through school structures, systems and policies.** **Slide 31 & 32**

(Forum Video: 42:56 - 44:34) Parental engagement should not be conflated with the presence of a parent governor, because this is a voice from the parent body but is not the only voice of the parental body. The contrast between parental community versus parent governor emphasises the **risks of relying on the one voice of the parent governor rather than a range of voices of the parent community**, to inform key governor decision making. This should include the **voices of the parents of the children most at risk of exclusion**, because that is how the school will become more attuned in terms of the Equality Duty, requiring that understanding and detail.

(Forum Video: 44:34 - 49:43) Education Endowment Foundation shows the need for schools to work in partnership with parents to support their child's learning. **Do parents understand the expectations of them, the culture of the school, whether the environment welcomes all parents and whether the school hears the voices of not just the dominant, but also the apprehensive, less confident parents.** A child's progress and outcomes are greatly enhanced by parental engagement, regardless of their socioeconomic status. **Are there opportunities for parents to meet governors? How do governors communicate with parents? If so, what are parents contributing?** Research suggests that there is nothing in place to track and monitor parental engagement. There will be cohorts with parents who are marginalised, not heard and need to be engaged with. **Governing boards should consider these key questions:** Is there a governor to raise the profile of the school and engage with parents? Do parents understand where governors fit within the structure of the organisation? Are parents involved in policy reviews? How are schools being held to account? [Slide 33 & 34](#)

Relevant Announcements and Reports

- **Parentkind released the findings of their annual Parent Voice survey**
- **Education Endowment Foundation Working with Parents to Support Children's Learning**

Governor Training - hosted virtually

Stakeholder Engagement and Complaints: How do governing boards ensure effective engagement with stakeholders and effectively manage complaints? Wednesday 25th May 2022
5:00 - 7:00pm

Well being, health and safety of students and/or staff

Key Notes From Governors Forum

(Forum Video: 08:40 - 09:21) Amidst Covid, schools have made great efforts to ensure they are safe and run smoothly, with **regular testing, good ventilation, mask wearing in public places and encouraging vaccinations.**

Relevant Announcements and Reports

- **Huge drop in school at-risk referrals during Covid:** vulnerable pupils 'dropping off the radar'
- **Children harmed by school streaming into lower ability groups,**
- **Covid: Secondary schools to test returning pupils on-site in January**
- **Effective Professional Development (PD),** selecting, designing, and delivering high quality PD.
- **attendance survey data published by the DfE shows another increase in both pupil and staff absence as a result of COVID-19.**
- **Exploring the role of the senior mental health lead with Andy Mellor from Carnegie Centre of Excellence in Mental Health**

Governor Training - hosted virtually

Wellbeing: How do governors ensure the development of emotional, mental health and wellbeing of children Tuesday 10th May 2022, 5:00 - 7:00pm

Safeguarding

Key Notes From Governors Forum

(Forum Video: 09:25 - 10:24) Safeguarding is a key responsibility for everyone, to make sure our children are safe. Over the summer, Ofsted published a report about **sexual harassment and abuse in schools** revealing a concerning level of unreported cases. **Reporting should be straightforward, minor incidents picked up and children must be taught a culture of respect.** A safeguarding audit has been completed to ascertain what schools have in place and possible ideas for implementation. Chris Roberts and the Safeguarding Team are available to support schools with any safeguarding issues.

Relevant Announcements and Reports

- **Hackney Checklist - safeguarding against sexual abuse and harassment**

Governor Training - hosted virtually

Safeguarding: How do Governors Fulfil their Responsibility to Safeguard and Protect Children?

Thursday, 3 February 2022:9:00 – 11:00am and Tuesday, 8 March 2022:5:00 – 7:00pm

Recruitment, development and retention of staff

Key Notes From Governors Forum

The importance of **Staff development** is illustrated in a recent Ofsted report for a school in Hackney. It reports how senior leaders have developed teachers to transform the way they teach the curriculum. It also reports “students welcome the support they receive from staff because they know that they genuinely care about them. Students recognise that staff go out of their way to help them to be successful”.

Relevant Announcements and Reports

- **Effective Professional Development Guidance**
- **Leadership Focus** journalist Nic Paton looks at how a values-led approach to school leadership might be a way forward.
- **Teacher Wellbeing Index** which provides an annual snapshot of the mental health and wellbeing
- **Workload** one of the most cited reasons for symptoms of poor mental health November 2021

Governor Training - hosted virtually

How do Governing Boards Create Excellent Workplaces that Support Staff Welfare, Manage Performance and Oversees Organisational Changes? Wednesday, 9 February 2022, 5pm to 7pm

Strategic business/financial planning and risk management

Key Notes From Governors Forum

(Forum Video: 10:55 - 13:23) Slide 6. The **government spending review typically will not impact greatly on Hackney schools** which are better funded than average schools in the country. 90% of Hackney schools are resourcefully managing their budgets and coping with the changes and pressures of additional SEND. A number of schools are being supported with **deficit recovery plans**. There is a **rising cost of meeting SEND needs**. EHCPlans do not cover all the costs of meeting a child’s needs in school. **Falling pupil rolls impact** some schools significantly and others not at all, it’s a very mixed picture across Hackney and currently affects primary schools, but will affect secondary schools in future years. Some, particularly **small primary schools, face financial challenges from costs of experienced teachers**. **Slide 7**

(Forum Video: 16:02 - 17:38) **80% of the budget should be allocated to staffing costs** and schools vary between 80-87%. We advise **5% contingency**. A **surplus of 12% over three years can be clawed back**. In the last year **tutoring funding** has been welcomed. **Slide 10**

(Forum Video: 17:39 - 19:57) **Maximising income** can be achieved through eg **lettings, charging for trips and clubs**. **Analysis of costs** such as staffing should incorporate the balance of teaching and learning responsibility costs. **Check eligibility for Pupil Premium** otherwise money can easily be missed. Schools must **check that SEND income received for EHC plans** is allocated to pupils. **Social media** should be used to reflect everything that the school has to offer. **Slide 11**

(Forum Video: 19:59 - 21:13) **Minimising expenditure** can be achieved through considering staffing structures, contracts, the **roles of senior staff, support staff**, 1:1 support, challenging the **use of agency staff** and the costs of **catering and photocopying**. **Slide 12**

(Forum Video: 21:14 - 21:39) The **organisation of classes** should be considered such as **merging classes**, vertical grouping with mixed year classes whilst having **risks as well as benefits**, or **sharing specialist primary teachers** such as **modern foreign languages, music or premises across schools**. **Slide 13**

(Forum Video: 21:40 - 23:14) **Reporting to governors** should be understandable and not overcomplicated. Overcomplicated budgets suggest fundamental lack of understanding and possible

masking of content. **Clarity and simplicity of reporting** should be expected. Governors should have **sufficient skills and expertise** to manage school budgets. Governors should **view reports and analysis prior to meetings** and expect to see **three year forecasts** to alert them to upcoming issues, and **pupil numbers and forecasting** are indicative of future income.

(Forum Video: 23:14 24:08) Governors should consider meaningful savings, tracked in terms of impact over three years, compared to one off savings.

Relevant Announcements and Reports

- **Financial benchmarking** against other schools
- **School resource management top 10 planning checks for governors**
- **Education recovery and resilience in England - EPI:** £13.5bn needed to address lost learning
- **CST developed a draft set of Core Responsibilities for School Trust CEOs.**
- **Governance volunteers and board practice: Recruitment - a key challenge for boards.**
- **Energy crisis hitting schools**
- **DfE Schools' views on the perceived benefits and obstacles to joining a multi academy trust**
- **The DfE published new guidance on the cost of school uniforms.**

Governor Training - hosted virtually

The Foundations of Strong Governance: Step 3. How do Governing Boards Strategically Assess and Manage Risks in their Schools? Wednesday, 23 February 2022 9:00 – 11:00am

How do Governing Boards make the right Strategic Financial Choices for their School?
Wednesday 4 May 2022 5pm to 7pm

Effective collaboration with the Hackney family of schools and key partners

Relevant Announcements and Reports

- Information on the work of the Hackney Schools Group Board

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