

Chair of Governors Update

27 January 2022

Dear colleagues,

Considering how 2022 began in the midst of the Omicron wave of Covid, we are proud of how successfully our school leaders and staff dedicated their efforts, keeping children safe and in school, and maintaining high quality learning.

It was a pleasure to host our Virtual forum last week, for almost 80 participants. It truly shows the commitment our governors continue to make in supporting, guiding and challenging our schools. **Preserving the welfare of staff** and our joint endeavours to **promote equality and anti-racism** were the key features of this forum. We hope the insights, captured in the **video** and **slides**, and notes within this update will particularly guide governors in supporting school leaders with these distinct and crucial matters.

Sharing information about board members is also crucial in helping build trust with staff, parents and the community. They not only desire, but they also have the right to know about **relevant business and financial interests**, and the **attendance** of the people who make key decisions about their school(s). They also wish to know how the governors fulfil their **equalities duties** and what they have prioritised as their **equality objectives**. This information is often missing from school websites, so please check. We, as always, also 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.

This New Year has brought challenges and fresh optimism. We hope you will find a moment to read about the **development of a diverse and anti-racist curriculum**, a hugely successful project led by Orlene Badu and developed by our community of teachers. We also hope you will **register here** to join 'Educational Success: The Hackney Picture' publication launch and panel discussion on Monday, 31 January 2022, 5.30pm - 6.30pm.

We look forward to working with you in creating more stories of success for our children as the year unfolds!

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 25th November 2021
- Thursday 20th January 2022
- Thursday 17th March 2022
- Thursday 5th May 2022
- Thursday 30th June 2022

Overview of **Spring** and **Summer** Governors Training Programme for 2021/22 is attached

Quality Education and high achievement for all

Key Notes From Governors Forum

Slides 4 & 5 Governors were welcomed and thanked for leading, supporting, guiding and challenging the leadership teams of their schools, as volunteers who donate their time to supporting children's education.

(Forum Video: 01:04 - 03:00) Whilst January 2022 is an improvement on January 2021, **Covid Cases are still high at 900 per 100,000 but they are declining** and schools and settings are all open. There are staffing challenges but there have been **no remote learning classes** since the first week of term, which is a strong start. In terms of **mitigations, vaccinations** are readily available. **It is important to promote vaccinations** for public health. **Face coverings, distancing, ventilation and minimising mixing** remain important mitigations.

Throughout this period there has continued to be a real sense of **ambition, inclusion and desire to keep the children safe**, with the knowledge that the best thing for them is to be back in school and receiving high quality lessons.

The **targets set for children at the end of KS2 and KS4 are ambitious and in line with pre-pandemic**, which is a credit to follow-ups on learning gaps.

(Forum Video: 07:14 - 08:07) **Attendance is around 90%** in primary and just below that in secondary level, which is about **5% lower than usual**. Attendance must remain a priority and children who find school difficult must be followed up.

(Forum Video: 03:03 - 04:25) Slide 5 School places and organisation work is addressing the **rising number of children with special educational needs (SEN) who need local education**, and many schools have started offering extra resource provision, which is welcomed. However, there is a decreasing uptake again this year in reception aged children and this **drop in pupil admission numbers is affecting school budgets**, and advice is available.

(Forum Video: 10:58 - 12:15) Slide 5 **The Hackney Schools Group Board** is working with head teachers on belonging, reading and the curriculum. Governors should get involved where it fits with the school priorities.

(Forum Video: 25:59 - 26:30) Slide 17 Year 2 pupils have not had a year that was not impacted by Covid. **Ofsted is still inspecting schools, but temporarily deferring inspections to schools who request it due to high staff absence.**(Forum Video: 26:31 - 28:27) **Slide 18** Ofsted frames their **curriculum expectations and key knowledge**, and **disciplinary learning** in terms of attitudes and understanding of success. Pupils are frequently asked about **what learning is remembered, so identify and close learning gaps supported by catch up and pupil premium.**

(Forum Video: 28:28 - 29:38) Slide 19 **Staff development and subject knowledge** is a theme. **Staff must be well supported** and school policies should include this. **Equalities** underpin all of this, to ensure that a disproportionate number of pupils are not adversely affected by provision of resources or policies, in terms of the rich variation and context of the backgrounds that is pertinent in Hackney. **Trips and experiences have been severely impacted and should now be reactivated with risk assessments taken.**

(Forum Video: 30:09 - 30:47) Slide 21 - 25 **There are exams and tests this year** in KS1, KS2, KS4 and KS5. There are **no changes to KS1 and KS2 tests**, but there is now a multiplication check in Year 4 and a phonics check in Year 1. **There are no adaptations for KS1 and KS2** but there are **some adaptations for KS4 with a provision of resources to support them.**

(Forum Video: 30:48 - 31:33) **A Level results will be released on 18 August 2022 and GCSE results will be released on 25 August 2022.**

(Forum Video: 31:34 - 32:56) **Challenges for schools in terms of exams relate to not having experience of formal exams for two years.** Year 6 and Year 11 pupils are still being affected by Covid and teachers are having to manage this. Historical data has been affected by pupil absence, which has made it harder to track.

Training on **Ofsted inspections and KS2 tests** is very relevant and highly advisable for governors.

Relevant Announcements and Reports

- **Ofsted Annual Report** (covering 2020-21 academic year)
- **Innovation in the Time of Covid:** what worked in our schools and what next?
- **CFEY: Reforming England's Schools: The Rocky Road**
- Governing Chatters podcast: **how to balance support and challenge; the urgent and the important, and the challenge of accountability in the current climate.**
- **School Recovery Strategies: Year 1 findings Research report:** DfE research to understand how schools responded to the impact of the pandemic and what further support they need
- **'All pupils, every ambition campaign: Future work'**. What governors can do to help.
- **Academies: making significant changes or closure by agreement**
- **Parents must be included in the national conversation about assessment reform**
- **External reviews of governance: guide for schools and academy trusts**

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, 9am to 11am
- **The Foundations of Strong Governance: Step 1: Introduction How do Governors Fulfil their Professional and Ethical Responsibility?** Wednesday 2nd March 2022, 5pm - 7pm
- **What do Governors Need to Know about the Ofsted Inspection Process?** Monday 7th March 2022, 5pm - 7pm
- **Administration of Key Stage 2 Tests: How do governing boards observe Key Stage 2 Test (SATs) Administration to assure best practice?** Wednesday 20th April, 5pm - 7pm

Promoting equalities and anti-racism

Key Notes From Governors Forum

Slide 31- 34 **Equalities** are important to all schools in Hackney but **there continues to be disproportionality in outcomes**, so the focus must remain on offering the **same ambition and opportunity for every child.**

(Forum Video: 43:30 - 46:45) Slide 36 Diversifying, equality and inclusiveness are words that are critically important and interconnected. A diverse governing board should have an instilled inclusive governance culture, be mindful of unconscious bias, and reflective of the community it serves. The **young governor initiative** success will be expanded across schools. We will also share **best practice around the recruitment of diverse governors**, particularly parent governors.

(Forum Video: 46:47 - 49:00) Slide 38 The legal **equality duties** need to be understood fully and implemented by governors. The **equality objectives** that schools have to publish should address the current emerging issues and be developed through engagement with those most affected, targeting the needs in terms of pupils, staff and parents. Systemic changes should result, and protect those with disadvantages. There will be **auditing of websites, governance training on equalities duties and sharing of best practice**.

(Forum Video: 49:01 - 52:20) Slide 39 We will be working with our governor community to look at how the **inclusive board culture** is perceived. Young governors are also providing rich information about their governing board experiences and there has been positive feedback from Chairs.

Relevant Announcements and Reports

- **More than half of Black children are now growing up in poverty** Data highlight an increase from 42% in 2010-11, to 53% in 2019-20, with Black children now more than twice as likely to be growing up in poverty as their White peers.
- NAHT: **Closing the gender pay gap in education:** The UK public sector pay gap “remains stubbornly high” with the Guardian reporting figures of 15.5% versus 9% in the private sector.
- **Inspiring Social Change:** The Joseph Rowntree Foundation is an independent social change organisation working to solve UK poverty.
- The Guardian: **School governors in England to be offered anti-racism training**
- The Guardian: **‘There is absolutely systemic racism’: BAME headteachers share their views. Four headteachers describe the obstacles they have had to overcome to reach senior leadership roles**
- NFER publishes new report: **Investigating the changing landscape of pupil disadvantage**

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, 9am to 11am
- **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

Slide 19 The **SEND provision must be rich** and SEND children should be engaging with the same amount of curriculum as their peers. Governors should be asking questions about this.

There has been a huge challenge from the Scrutiny Commission around disproportionality and governing bodies will be approached in terms of understanding it better, intervening earlier and preventing it, because **an exclusion is a safeguarding crisis**.

Relevant Announcements and Reports

- Report of children and young people and scrutiny commission: **School Exclusions in Hackney**
- **RSA Inclusive & Nurturing Schools Toolkit**
- **DFE SEN support:** Findings from a qualitative study Research report December 2021

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, 5pm to 7pm

Engagement with parents

Key Notes From Governors Forum

Slide 30 The Hackney Schools Group has done some excellent **work on belonging**, and research and learning on this has made a real difference in some settings in terms of children and parents getting involved in the learning experience.

(Forum Video: 08:35 - 09:13) Working with parents continues to empower them to best support their children. **Schools must continue to ensure their processes are accessible to parents.**

Governor Training - hosted virtually

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

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

Key Notes From Governors Forum

Beyond Covid, an aftermath of fatigue is expected in colleagues, so **staff wellbeing** is important, including the health and wellbeing of head teachers. Our school is also working really hard to support and maintain children suffering mental health crises resulting from the pandemic of which there has been a huge increase.

(Forum Video: 13:12 - 14:42) Slide 7 The introduction of Plan B has initiated the review and update of vulnerability risk assessments only when related to changes in an individual's circumstances or new government restrictions. (Forum Video: 14:42 - 16:16) **Slide 8** There has also been a change in **self certification** which **should return to being 7 days on 27 January 2022.**

(Forum Video 17:16 - 17:41) Slide 9 The **Coronavirus workforce fund** is for absent staff due to Covid and has been extended until 18 February 2022.

(Forum Video 17:42 - 19:18) Slide 10 Regarding pregnant staff: from December 2021 risk assessments were required immediately upon the knowledge of pregnancy and contact minimised. Open dialogue and advice to get vaccinated is recommended.

(Forum Video: 19:25 - 21:26) Slide 11 Guidance for unvaccinated and vaccinated staff must be followed in terms of testing and self isolating. School leaders and Unions should continue to encourage staff to get vaccinated.

(Forum Video: 21:27 - 24:39) Slide 12 The **Employee Assistance Programme** online/telephone counselling service and **Education Support** is accessible to staff and head teachers. Regular staff surveys are encouraged.

Relevant Announcements and Reports

- **Leading in Lockdown Research: Request for Deputy and Assistant Heads to be Interviewed During the last year, ASCL and Universities of Nottingham and Oxford**
- Well School's **podcast on leadership well-being**
- **Has the provision of mental health services for children and young people improved?** MPs from Health and Social Care Committee Dec 2021
- The CFEY: Alix Robertson and Dame Rachel De Souza podcast : **Youth Mental Health**

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?** Wednesday, 9 February 2022, 5pm to 7pm

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

Safeguarding

Key Notes From Governors Forum

(Forum Video 06:16 - 07:13) Slide 5 Keeping children safe continues to be really important and work by schools and safeguarding governors. Last year, Everyone's Invited website revelations emphasised sexual harassment in secondary level schools, particularly, and work is being done to address this. **Pupil voices** must stay on school agendas.

Relevant Announcements and Reports

- Commission Young Lives - Thematic Report 1: **OUT OF HARM'S WAY: A new care system to protect vulnerable teenagers at risk of exploitation and crime**
- **Parent guide about online sexual harassment**
- **DfE launches consultation on statutory guidance, Keeping children safe in education 2022**

Governor Training - hosted virtually

- **Safeguarding: How do Governors Fulfil their Responsibility to Safeguard and Protect Children?** Thursday 3rd February 2022, 9am - 11am

Recruitment, development and retention of staff

Key Notes From Governors Forum

(Forum video: 34:37 - 35:15) Slide 27 In Hackney's commitment to being an anti racist Council, it is very important to ensure staff reflect the diverse community they serve. The **Inclusive Recruitment and Selection Policy** aims to ensure that a diverse workforce is recruited and best practice is covered across all roles but there is a focus on middle management and leadership roles. **Slide 28 (Forum Video: 35:15 - 36:18)** The **Inclusive Staff Development and Career Progression Policy** supports the stages of best practice and recruitment, in terms of recruiting from all parts of the community, retaining and developing staff. Governors should read and familiarise themselves with these policies. **(Forum Video: 36:18 - 36:58)** **Hackney Schools Group Board** is commissioning these two policies through quality assurance and working with six Hackney schools to identify best practice, successes and challenges and will share the results.

Slide 29 Professional development should now be prioritised with opportunities of promotion, development of skills and additional responsibilities.

(Forum Video: 37:43 - 39:29) Slide 31 - 34 Hackney's senior leaders are disproportionately white at 73-83% in terms of head teachers. In terms of representation of the community by teachers there are some gaps there too according to the School Workforce Census 2020. Support staff are made up of 29% white and 64% are Black, Asian and Mixed, which shows further disparity.

(Forum Video: 39:30 - 42:40) Slide 34 The data shows a **large disparity at senior leader level** in the white ethnic background compared to other ethnic backgrounds which clearly is not representative of Hackney. Governors must think about how they can affect this. **Hackney Schools Group Board has engaged with parents** to initiate a project **promoting inclusive recruitment and the ambition is to share good practice outcomes**- ideas, thoughts and input are welcomed.

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?** Wednesday, 9 February 2022, 5pm to 7pm

Strategic business/financial planning and risk management

Relevant Announcements and Reports

- DfE how to arrange an effective external review of governance (ERG) for your school or trust.
- TES: **How to read MAT financial accounts - and why you should.**

Governor Training - hosted virtually

- **The Foundations of Strong Governance: Step 2. How do Governing Boards Make the Right Strategic Financial Choices for their School?** Wednesday 4 May 2022, 5pm - 7pm
- **The Foundations Of Strong Governance Step 3. How Do Governing Boards Strategically Assess And Manage Risks In Their Schools?** Tuesday 17 May 2022, 5pm - 7pm

Effective collaboration with the Hackney family of schools and key partners

Relevant Announcements and Reports

Information about the **Hackney Schools Group Board** work that brings together representatives from schools across the borough, as well as independent experts, to provide a long term steer to system and school improvement in Hackney.

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