

Chair of Governors Update

31 MARCH 2021

Dear Colleagues,

Last week marked one year since the first lockdown began, evoking reflections on how these extraordinary events have impacted on our lives. At this moment in time, we think of those who have suffered loss, we value our community-led support, and we are thankful to those who may have cared for us, especially across the medical and education and children services.

Although our youth were least affected by the virus itself, the necessity for national lockdown brought with it inevitable costs: disruption to education and limited access to support for development and wellbeing. The impact of the pandemic has exacerbated existing socio-economic inequalities. We already anticipate a worsening of the evident gaps in attainment between the poorest and most disadvantaged and their peers.

The dedication and passion of our school leaders, their staff and governors shine through now more than ever, and represent a driving force to address the cost to our children. This was captured from the reflection shared at our forum last week, which included:

- *recognising the role our schools play as beacons in our community to care for our children, staff and their families;*
- *providing a great education including the development of remote learning and a recovery curriculum;*
- *finding new ways to address diversity and inclusion, and tackle inequalities;*
- *capitalising on what we have learned to do better, what we have innovated and the speed with which these have been achieved.*

We recognise from feedback how much you value the information we share to keep you well informed. As such, in the coming term and beyond, we will continue to explore key matters and share best practice through our forums and updates, and remind you to hold the date for our next **Governors Virtual forum on 22nd April 2021**. We know this helps fulfil your crucial strategic role, balancing challenge with support for your school leaders as you work together to build a better and more equitable education system.

We thank you for everything that you do to support our schools and communities, and wish you happy Passover holiday and enjoyable Easter school break!!

Sincerely

Maggie Kalnins, Leader of Governance Services

Key Matters Shared at the Virtual Governors Forum on 24 March 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 March, highlight relevant announcements & reports, and signpost training opportunities. These are presented to complement the 5 themes of the Roadmap for Continuing of Strategic Governance which can be found [here](#).

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

Key Matters Shared at the Virtual Governors Forum: Hackney Context

The **relationship with parents and carers** is really important and for many has been strengthened by the need to work together and the understanding parents and carers have gained of the curriculum, and appreciation of what teachers do on a daily basis.

Attendance since 8 March has been great, averaging 93-94% which is really close to what it normally would be. Schools are working hard to get some of the children who are wavering on the edge of coming back in, back into school. Please contact Sue Roberts who is working with FAST if there are any issues you would like support with to do with attendance.

Governors must be mindful of our **children with SEND** who may have experienced less learning or more difficulties returning back to school and ask school leaders about strategies and progress of those children, as well as those children with a social worker.

All **statutory primary assessment** activities have essentially been cancelled by the DfE for the year, however now there is information that these are optional, and data collection for internal purposes is fine, such as phonic checks. This could be done later in the year as there are other priorities now.

Key Stage 1 SATs or tests could be given if schools wish them to. Information came out this year about the Year 4 times table check which has only ever been optional, that schools can try them in June if they want to. Information from the DfE about Key Stage 2 SATs is that they would recommend the use of them towards the end of the year in June to inform parental reports or to pass on to secondary schools, but it is up to individual schools. *Virtual Forum for Hackney Governors Slide 12*

Juniper primary outcomes reported unsurprisingly, sizable gaps for the youngest children, those with SEN and those disadvantaged. Year 6 pupils, according to teacher assessment data from summer last year to December 2020, managed to catch up well. Regarding trends, Year 5 data had some significant gaps so it might be to do with the kind of work that Year 6 teachers do in reviewing the primary curriculum. In terms of the youngest children, governors need to ask what the school is doing for them, how can the support continue to these groups and the best use of their time. *Virtual Forum for Hackney Governors Slide 13-14*

There are **no exams this year which impacts on Key Stage 4 and Post-16**. Schools are asked to submit their final grades to the exam boards on 18 June; A Level results will be announced on 10 August and GCSE results on 12 August. Schools are moving towards assessment portfolios to include class work, home work, remote work, project work, mini tests and mock exams. Some schools have developed an **assessment calendar** with key assessment points and then they go on to standardisation, ensuring these are published on their websites so the assessment cycle is absolutely clear to students and parents. The exam board will produce guidance, materials, tests and questions for schools. All schools have built **quality assurance** into their assessment calendars and where managers and subject leaders have been checking aspects such as the selection of evidence, the weighting between different components and the processes for moderation because it is important that the final assessed grades have integrity, accuracy and validity. With lessons learned from last year, schools are using blind marking, and we are also advising them to revisit last year's guidance on **tackling bias**. *Virtual Forum for Hackney Governors Slide 16*

Reflections from school leader and Governors about the impact of the pandemic, strong resilient nature of children returning to schools and how governors have and must help schools move strategically forward. *Reflections from School Leader and Governors PDF*

Relevant Announcements & Reports

- The Department for Education has issued comprehensive advice to schools on **handling sexual harassment and sexual violence in school**. This can be found both in Part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education and their more comprehensive guidance Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children in Schools and Colleges. *Letter to Schools - Guidance on Preventing Sexual Harassment*
- Schools and colleges should continue to improve the **quality of remote education** and have a strong contingency plan in place for remote provision. Details of the expectations for remote provision can be found in the guidance for opening schools and opening colleges. This updated **guidance** is to help schools and colleges support pupils' and students' remote education. It should be read alongside statutory safeguarding guidance on **keeping children safe in education**.
- National secondary school Offer Day was on 1 March 2021 and the **Secondary Transition Day is on 1 July 2021**.
- **Research: Identifying Special Educational Needs & Disabilities** A new study from the Education Policy Institute (EPI), funded by the Nuffield Foundation, highlights significant inconsistencies in how children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in England are identified and supported. The research shows that access to support is decided by a "postcode lottery" – with the chances of receiving SEND support from the school or from the local authority largely dictated by the school that a child attends, rather than their individual circumstances. Children living in the most disadvantaged areas of the country are less likely to be formally recognised as having SEND than similar pupils in more affluent areas, highlighting how there is a "rationing of support" in many areas of high need.
- **The operational guidance for schools** fully re-opening recommends taking a mindful and considerate approach that may help parents who have difficulty obtaining uniform items or are experiencing financial pressures.
- **Ofsted announced** that there will not be a return to a full programme of graded inspections across education until the autumn term. During the summer term Ofsted will make on-site inspections of early years settings and on-site monitoring inspections of schools, FE and skills providers. These inspections will follow on from the monitoring and regulatory work, and recognise the challenges for providers in re-establishing on-site education for all. On-site monitoring inspections in schools will not be graded unless there is a real improvement or real and significant concerns. Early years inspections will comply with the full Education Inspection Framework EIF. Monitoring inspections of weaker schools will begin from 4 May, under the EIF. Ofsted will also inspect 'good' schools that, due to the pandemic, have not had an inspection within the statutory five-year window. Other than where significant concerns are raised, Ofsted will not inspect secondary schools during the first half of the summer term, and they will continue to prioritise emergency inspections of all schools where significant concerns are raised.

Governor Training - hosted virtually:

- **Safeguarding: How do Governors Fulfil their Responsibility to Safeguard and Protect Children?** Choice of dates :Thursday, 1 April 2021, 6.pm to

8.pm or Thursday, 6 May 2021, 9.am to 11.am or Wednesday, 16 June 2021, 6.pm to 8.pm

- **Administration of Key Stage 2 Tests: How do governing boards observe key stage 2 tests (SATs) administration to assure best practice?** Tuesday, 27 April 2021, 6.pm to 8.pm
- **Wellbeing: How do Governors Ensure the Development of Emotional, Mental Health and Wellbeing of Children?** Thursday, 6 May 2021, 9.am to 11.am
- **Introduction – How do Governors Fulfil their Professional and Ethical Responsibility?** Tuesday, 18 May, 6.pm to 8.pm
- **Stakeholder Engagement and Complaints: How do Governing Boards Ensure Effective Engagement with Stakeholders and Effectively Manage Complaints?** Wednesday, 26 May 2021, 6.pm to 8.pm
- **How do you Strengthen Governance through Effective Board Administration and Accountability?** Tuesday, 8 June 6.pm to 8.pm
- **How does the Chair of Governors Shape Strong Governance and what is Distinct about their Role** Tuesday, 15 June 2021, 9.am to 11.am
- **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: Hackney Context

Guidance has been sent through regarding **recognition of staff** which has been raised by some Trade Unions and some head teachers around options about how schools may wish to recognise their staff, and whilst budgets might be tight and specific terms and conditions do not allow you to just make payments to your staff in recognition of them working very hard and successfully.

Most schools are doing **staff surveys**: Governors must think about what kind of things they could do and consider to say thank you to staff. We recommend regular ongoing surveys.

We were able to **support vaccine provision** for staff that were working on a one to one basis with students that had EHCPs, we worked with ARPs and the PRU and this amounted to around 700 people who have now had their first dose. There is still a long way to go but there has been quite a difference made in the past month.

Remember **to be kind and in relation to your staff and head teachers** and remember that whilst we want world class schools we also want wellbeing, and we want healthy, energetic and resilient leaders and staff as a whole, so it's a high standard.

HR coronavirus FAQs: Please refer to the [HR coronavirus FAQs](#) for guidance on staffing matters related to the coronavirus pandemic including guidance on **clinically extremely vulnerable staff** following shielding being paused on 31 March (Question 21). If you have any questions about the guidance or need advice on specific cases, please speak to your HR Business Partner or Advisor.

Relevant Announcements & Reports

- **Shielding ending on 31 March 2021** :The Government's [shielding guidance](#) and schools (COVID-19): [operational guidance](#) is yet to be updated. Whilst we wait for further guidance, **Hackney Education recommends that Headteachers/leaders**: Confirm to staff identified as **Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV)** that shielding is due to end on the 31st March. Revisit the individual risk assessments and continue to support CEV staff to work from home where possible, using the risk assessment to discuss alternative ways of working and the [systems of controls](#) that are in place for the school and any

additional measures that need to be put in place for the CEV member of staff if they are unable to work from home.

- **Test and Trace support payments** - some school staff, along with parents and carers may be eligible for a one-off Test and Trace Support Payment of £500. Eligibility includes: on a low income; unable to work from home; at risk of losing income as a result of self-isolating; meet the eligibility criteria.
- **Recognition of support/teaching staff during the pandemic:** Governing Bodies and School Leaders may wish to consider ways to reward staff for the work they have undertaken during this time. Some schools may be considering financial incentives, but it's important to recognise that this is a limited option due to the constraints of school budgets as well as the terms and conditions of both teaching and support staff. We recommend that Governing Boards and School Leaders discuss this with their HR Business Partner or Advisor.

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?** Tuesday, 11 May 2021, 9.am to 11.am

Theme 4: Inequality and community cohesion

Key Matters Shared at the Virtual Governors Forum: Hackney Context

There was a huge focus on how we are **closing attainment gaps between key groups, particularly disadvantaged and minority ethnic groups**. Overall in Hackney we are proud that people from disadvantaged and ethnic minority backgrounds perform better than their peers nationally. *Virtual Forum for Hackney Governors Slide 5*

Nationally and locally there is a slow down and narrowing of performance gaps and whilst there is the success of students outperforming their peers nationally, gaps locally and across the country seem to have plateaued. We also know that the pandemic is now going to have a stronger impact on certain key groups. *Virtual Forum for Hackney Governors Slide 6*

Nationally the proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged in schools is 26% and in Hackney it's 53%. At Key Stage 4, again this is a similar layout, at age expected standard in GCSE English and Mathematics, at standard pass and again there is a stubborn gap at the end of Key Stage 4 with a standard pass, and then again in Hackney there is a stubborn negative gap. *Virtual Forum for Hackney Governors Slide 7*

Hackney disadvantaged learners and non disadvantaged learners outperform their national peers. The figures show the gaps between the groups. This is in contrast to disadvantaged students across England are not making expected progress and are in fact making negative progress. This is clearly not the case in Hackney. *Virtual Forum for Hackney Governors Slide 8*

At the end of Key Stage 2 to the end of Key Stage 4, when pupils leave primary school and secondary school the gaps nationally have got bigger and then it is the same for pupils of black heritage, the gaps have got bigger and yet the sub groups outperform their national equivalents. This has been analysed and it has been identified that broadly there are gender differences so gender and disadvantage

combine, for some pupils it will be home circumstance and some students do not know how to achieve their ambition. *Virtual Forum for Hackney Governors Slide 9*

There has been a surge in equity focused evaluation in the past year. Around 2005 in Hackney there was a negative deficit, pupil blaming model with low attainment and low aspiration. Loic Menzies reported for Joseph Rowntree Foundation looked at poverty and affluence and they moved to a new model after identifying that the problem was that there was low attainment because the children could not reach their goals, because they did not know how to, so they started losing faith. *Virtual Forum for Hackney Governors Slide 11*

The actions for the schools are around focusing, support, expectation, ambition and helping children understand what they need to do to reach their goals. The model has developed and school leavers and governors are picking up on equity focused evaluation, and becoming more in tune and aware of social justice, some of which was happening before the murder of George Floyd.

Headteachers are starting to consider developing a mindset and an ethos that puts value on diversity and difference and it is all about partnership and enabling people, including staff, to be their very best and the outcome is in terms of students is attainment, progress, ambition and personal ambition and in leaders it is that moral confidence. There are big in-roads in secondary schools with this new mode. In summary, there are gaps that we would like to close which are not being helped by the pandemic.

Taken with the killing of George Floyd last year and the subsequent energy of Black Lives Matter, and the recommitment to anti-racism across all our schools there is a real need to keep equalities at the forefront of everything we do - to do with achievement, care, parent involvement and recruitment of staff. We continue to promote strategies to further promote equalities, particularly at this time in terms of anti-racism.

Hackney Education is working very closely with Young Hackney and Children's Social Care which is reflected on the ground as well with vulnerable children, some of whom have complex lives and require more than one professionals' involvement. We are keen to hear about successes in that area as well as thoughts on areas for improvement. It is important that governors know who their key partners are around vulnerable children in schools.

Relevant Announcements & Reports

- **The COVID Decade: understanding the long-term societal impacts of COVID-19** - report by the The British Academy March 2021
- **Let's Talk About Race:** Naga Munchetty travels across the country to understand what race and racism mean in the UK today.
- **Child Poverty can't be the elephant in the room by Loic Menzies and Child poverty is not unavoidable: Part II of the elephant in the room by Loic Menzies**
- **6-part webcast series: Diverse Educators are working in collaboration with the national organisations responsible for school governance to amplify the conversations around diverse representation of school governance, for Governing Bodies and Trust Boards.**
- **Young People on the Margins: Book Launch** by The Centre for Education and Youth.

Governor Training - hosted virtually:

- **Tackling Inequalities: Hackney Young Black Men Initiative – Understanding Cultural Competency, Racial Identity and Unconscious Bias**: Tuesday, 27 April 2021, 9.am to 11.am
- **Tackling Inequalities: How do Governors Ensure an Inclusive Approach for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities?** Wednesday, 28 April 2021, 6.pm to 8.pm
- **Tackling Inequalities: How do Governors Ensure an Inclusive Approach for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities?** Thursday, 10 June 2021, 9.am to 11.am
- **Tackling Inequalities: How can Governors Improve Outcomes for those at Risk of Exclusion and What Should they know before Considering an Exclusion?** Thursday, 17 June 2021, 6.pm to 8.pm
- **Tackling Inequalities: Hackney Young Black Men Initiative – Understanding Cultural Competency, Racial Identity and Unconscious Bias** Tuesday, 22 June 2021, 6.pm to 8.pm

Theme 5: Financial management matters

Relevant Announcements & Reports

- **Guidance: Principles for the best use of catch up funding:** In the Summer term, schools will receive a further £33.33 per pupil or £100 per place catch-up funding. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has published a [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) support guide for schools](#) with evidence-based approaches to catch up for all students.

Governor Training - hosted virtually:

- **How do Governing Boards Make the Right Strategic Financial Choices for their School?** Tuesday, 4 May 2021, 6.pm to 8.pm



The Chair of Governors Update is published by the Governors Services Team, Hackney Education.

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