

Chair of Governors Update

8 February 2024

Dear Colleagues,

Our Governors Forum last week focused on safeguarding our children. This is a crucially important theme that encompasses all aspects of how we support our children's education, behaviour, wellbeing, and inclusion.

Safeguarding our children is not only broad scoping, it demands a level of professional trust that is unique to our education ecosystem. This trust is beautifully described in the quote by Kofi Annan ...: *"There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children. There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want and that they can grow up in peace."*

We were delighted to have Justin Madubuko, Chair and former pupil of Cardinal Pole join the forum to share his school's journey in minimising suspensions and permanent exclusions. This has resulted in developing a sustainable, proportionate and successful system to manage student behaviour. We also heard from Kate Cracknell, Head of Wellbeing & Education Safeguarding who was joined by colleagues, sharing their insights to help governors better understand how we ensure our schools are safeguarding every child. They also addressed wider matters related to behaviour, wellbeing and inclusion, and the importance of engaging with parents and carers.

As you watch back and reflect on the presentations in the [video](#), [slide deck](#) and notes below, we hope the content of this forum will further support and inspire the most crucial role you have as governors - that of supporting your leaders and all staff in ensuring our children are safe, happy and ready to learn.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the Chairs Update and we wish our school colleagues a lovely February half term break!

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 virtually from 5pm to 6.30pm on Thursday 1st February. The event focused on the following key area:

- Sharing Headlines/ best practice from our chairs and leader
- Behaviour, wellbeing & inclusion of all pupils
- Safeguarding - focusing on the big issues and how governors ensure safeguarding practices are robust
- Harnessing Parent / Carer engagement
- (The [slide deck](#) and [video](#) from last week's event)

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

- 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.

EDUCATION DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Assistant Director of School Performance and Improvement - Jason Marantz

Headline Notes:

- **Ofsted:** Sir Martyn Oliver, who took over the role of chief inspector for Ofsted at the start of the new year, delayed Ofsted inspections so that all lead inspectors could undertake mental health awareness training. Inspections of schools and further education providers in England to recommence from 22 January with greater focus on wellbeing of school leaders.
[Education Committee report:](#) Ofsted and Government must rebuild trust and make major changes to school inspections
Updated Ofsted Handbooks can be found below:
 - [The School Inspection Handbook](#)
 - [The School Monitoring handbook](#)
 - [Summary of Changes](#)
- **Pupil outcomes:** Positive outcomes data shows gaps narrowing between SEND pupils and their peers. National data gaps are smaller
- **Universal Free School Meals** from the Mayor of London has been extended for another school year. Teams are working to ensure that pupil premium funding does not reduce
- **Draft of [Gender questioning children: draft schools and colleges guidance](#)** has been released. There is an opportunity to [respond to consultation](#) which closes at 11:59pm on 12th March 2024. We also encourage governors to consider what this guidance means for schools.
- **Estates Strategy:** Falling pupil rolls across London / Hackney continues to be a challenge
- and threaten the local education systems. Hackney surplus primary places: currently 22%, (< 600, empty seats, costing the local system c £30m /year). Current planned closures / amalgamation of primary schools, will reduce system surplus from 22% to 17%. We need to reach a surplus of 5-10% for system viability.
A working group has been formed of council officers, headteachers, and chairs of governors. PAN London directors workshop is also being held in Hackney, bringing together Local Authority representation to consider the scale of issues and sustainable solutions.

See [slides](#) 4 - 6 (Video section **1:44 - 13:41**)

SHARING HEADLINES/ BEST PRACTICE FROM OUR CHAIRS AND LEADERS

Chair of Governors, Cardinal Pole Catholic School - Justin Madubuko

Headline Notes:

- Justin Madubuko is the chair of governors at Cardinal Pole Catholic School, which was also his former secondary school. Justin draws his experience and professional perspective from the 10 years that he spent as a foundation governor at Cardinal Pole.
- Cardinal Pole had one of the highest numbers of Permanent Exclusions (PEXs) in the borough in 2015-2016 and since then, have been on a journey to minimise suspensions and permanent exclusions over several years. They have developed sustainable, proportionate and successful systems to manage student behaviour.
- For context, in 2015-2016 Cardinal Pole issued over 250 suspensions (then Full Time Exclusions) and 8 PEXs in an academic year. The school was one of the highest excluding schools in Hackney, and in the country, so a complete redesign and rethink of every facet of their systems was needed.
- The outcome is that suspensions have averaged approximately 50 per academic year. In 2022-23 there were over 2500 across Hackney. Cardinal Pole achieved this through:
 - **Standardised behaviour expectations** that are revisited consistently by staff and underpinned by a common language. Behaviour is effectively a subject like any other and can be taught from Day 1.
 - **Comprehensive tracking of behaviour** data across all year groups. This allows the school to put into place early intervention that later avoids suspensions. It also means having a detailed understanding of the kinds of behaviours that lead to suspensions and how they can be avoided.

- **Investment** in a dedicated non-teaching Pastoral Support Manager in every year group. Currently, as a first for Cardinal Pole, one of the Head of Years is a non-teaching pastoral member of staff which is a slight change but has matched the cohort's needs and has generated positive results.
- Built an **on-site internal 'alternative provision'** unit to support early intervention. Used a 'first call' pathway to suspension, where children are not there longer than they need to be. This gives the team time to address any challenges as early as possible so that children can return to their main classroom environment with the least disruption to their learning possible.
- **High quality CPD** for staff on the right use of **'Restorative' approaches** to enable staff to intervene and find solutions quickly to issues before they escalate to the point of a possible suspension.
- The overall attendance goal is 95% which the children work towards
- The school have made reasonable adjustments to their for pupils with SEN, and recognise that there is a growing number of pupils with SEN, particularly post-Covid so the school is eager to adjust to their needs where possible so they can flourish in the mainstream school environment throughout their school lives.
- Zero tolerance behaviour has always been in place but the focus now is on how we provide support to the children who need it - when needed, her parents are engaged at the earliest juncture to gain their support alongside the school. Changes in the behaviour policy have been published on the school website.
- When children spend time in the restorative room, they are not there longer than they need to be, and they work towards getting ready to rejoin the main classroom environment.
- The school has also taken on a very strong culture of reward. Rewards might includes trips, assembly recognition and lunch with headteacher
- Cardinal Pole provides a range of extra-curricular activities such as maths and art clubs - support by governance approved funding to engage their pupils

See [slides](#) 7 - 10 (Video section **13:41 - 30:08**)

SAFEGUARDING AND GOVERNANCE: WHAT DO GOVERNORS NEED TO BE DOING TO ENSURE SAFEGUARDING PRACTICES ARE ROBUST ACROSS THEIR SCHOOL?
Katherine Cracknell - Head of Wellbeing & Education Safeguarding

Headline Notes:

- The wellbeing and education safeguarding team has created a live handbook for governors which can be accessed here: [Hackney Education Safeguarding Guidance for Governors](#)
- [Compare the performance of schools and colleges in England](#)
- [The Prevent duty: an introduction for those with safeguarding responsibilities](#)
- Adjustments must be made in behaviour policy to make sure that it is accessible and all children are able to succeed, it is important to see and hear every child and learn from them to keep them safe as best we can.
- Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is the front door to statutory and non-statutory family support services in Hackney. Education is the 3rd highest referrer after police and health, but has the lowest "No Further Action" (NFA) rates of all referrers into MASH. This suggests that schools and settings are making really informed and accurate referrals. Schools and the local authority have good connections which enables us to provide strong multi-agency responses.
- Ensure schools have Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and that they are getting enough support and resources to successfully carry out their role. Consider how much time they are being allocated and whether their CPD supports their needs. How well can they do that role given the provision by the school. Availability to those children and parents. Operational staff must be protected so that they can settle into the roles - Relevance longevity experience.
- Feedback directly from children is valuable because they identify gaps that may have been missed. It is also key to understand the intersectionality between ethnicity, SEND and poverty. Those factors can interact and combine and push children out of schools and society. Within those cohorts, it can put children at risk. Empathy and listening is key. With pre-verbal children, it is important to understand their body language, their normal cues and have really strong connections with their families and carers.

- Check policies, audits, review for safeguarding. Talk to children, talk to staff. We have a duty of care to staff - do they feel safe/have a safe space? It is imperative as they will be responsible for creating safe space for children - teachers, teaching assistants.
- Small ways of keeping children safe, e.g. certain safe spaces, more teachers around will help prevent children from becoming dysregulated
- [City of London & Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership \(CHSCP\)](#) Things You Should Know Newsletter available to sign up to

See [slides](#) 11 - 19 (Video section **30:30 - 43:25**)

BEHAVIOUR, WELLBEING & INCLUSION AND ALTERNATIVE PROVISION
 Katherine Cracknell - Head of Wellbeing & Education Safeguarding
 Karen Thomson - Alternative Provision Commissioner

Headline Notes:

Behaviour, Wellbeing and Inclusion

- Safeguarding is an important focus as broadly speaking, we are assured that the children are in school with people looking after them and when they are not at school, it is a concern because during school hours, school is the safest place to be
- The data is from the 2021/22 census which was the most recent report released. DfE have delayed the data for 2022/23 em setbacks.
- Attendance is very good across settings in Hackney, while exclusion and suspensions levels in Secondary settings remains above national levels. Primary and Special Schools below local national level for exclusions.
- Hackney Education offers a free universal service to all schools in order to support exclusions and bridging social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) challenges. This year schools are entitled to support and advice from a named attendance officer. Please contact [Katherine Cracknell \(katherine.cracknell@hackney.gov.uk\)](mailto:katherine.cracknell@hackney.gov.uk) to find out more or to discuss more support.
- Each school should look at their own proportionality makeup in schools and compare against children who need more support and where that can be looked at.
- Consider what happens before exclusion or after exclusion i.e. how is the child welcomed back into the learning environment?

Alternative Provision

- Alternative provision: National and legal context for Governors to know and to consider. What's new or revised?
 1. **A revised SEND AP national improvement plan was published and launched in 2023.** This reinforced the role of alternative provision in schools curriculum design and inspection: Specifically in adapting policies to prevent and intervene with the most vulnerable children; utilising and or establishing high quality alternative provision
 2. **Under s. 29A of the Education Act 2002, introduced by the Education and Skills Act 2008 a governing board of a maintained school can require a pupil to attend**

another education setting as a temporary measure, when interventions or targeted support have not been successful in improving a pupil's behaviour. This could be either to an Alternative Provision (AP) or a managed move to another school (see separate webpage.) Academies have similar powers if their Articles of Association are written to include them.

3. **Although the legislation, regulations and guidance do not apply to Academies, they can provide Academies with an example of good practice**
 4. Depending on the needs of the pupil, this could involve full time education off-site or **part time** in Alternative Provision and school. If part time there is an expectation of robust intervention and review plans led by the school.
 5. **When possible, in-school interventions/centres or targeted support from AP schools** should be used to meet a pupil's individual needs and circumstances – whether behavioural or special educational. (**Suspension and Permanent Exclusions Guidance 2022, para 36**) and to avoid exclusion where possible
 6. If a pupil with a disability or SEN has been moved off-site, the duties **increase and broaden** under the Equality Act 2010 and the Children and Families Act 2014 continue to apply (for example, to make reasonable adjustments or to put support in place to meet SEN) **90% of AP children have SEND needs (2021/2022)**
- What does this mean in relation to Governor duties - Quick checklist: Alternative Provision 2023+
 1. The length of time a pupil spends in another mainstream school or AP will depend on what best supports the pupil's needs and potential improvement in behaviour. Why?
 2. The nature of the intervention, its objectives, and timeline to achieve these should be clearly defined and agreed with the provider upfront.
 3. The plan should then be **frequently monitored and reviewed**.
 4. Pupils must continue to receive a **broad and balanced education**, and this will support reintegration into mainstream schooling.
 5. Registered or unregistered settings alongside the schools AP quality assurance tool/policy
 6. When directing or reviewing Alternative Provision Governors **must have regard** to the [Alternative Provision: Statutory guidance for local authorities, headteachers and governing bodies 2013](#) and they **must comply** with the [Education \(Educational Provision for Improving Behaviour\) Regulations 2010](#). And [accompanying amendments of 2012](#)
 7. New AP quality assurance audit tool being produced currently
 - A great deal of attention is being put into Alternative Provision and will provide better options for our children who need additional support in order to access mainstream education.

Alternative Provision Additional Resources:

- [What is alternative provision? 7 Fast facts for school, parents, and Governors?](#)
- [DfE: Alternative Provision Statutory guidance for local authorities](#)
- [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) and Alternative Provision \(AP\) Improvement Plan: Right Support, Right Place, Right Time](#)
- [IntegratED: Alternative Provision Quality Toolkit](#)

See [slides](#) 20 - 36 (Video section **44:25 - 1:11:32**)

PARENT/CARER ENGAGEMENT - DEEP DIVE

Laura Stagg - Parent Engagement System Leader

Headline Notes:

- Parent/carer engagement is the biggest changeable factor in children's learning which is one of the most cost-effective changes with the strongest evidence. It also can provide results in as little as 4 months.
- Check if there is a lead member of staff at the school who drives it, and how much time they allocate to it. Consider adding it to CPD goals.
- **Vision**
 - **All pupils achieve, thrive and grow** as a result of parents and carers feeling well **supported, engaged and valued** and schools, services and parents/ carers working closely together. Parents and carers feel well supported to play their **crucial role** in their child's achievement. They are **engaged** as a result of knowing their value, being **listened to and having barriers removed**. Schools and services understand their parents and carers, they know the invaluable impact of effective parent/ carer engagement and are **relentless** in ensuring the vision is met. **Excellent practice is shared** and Hackney is recognised for **leading practice** in parent/ carer engagement. Over time this **ensures safe, connected, engaged and effective communities**.
- **National Picture - Recent [Survey from Parentkind](#)**
 - 2.8 million parents are struggling to afford to send their children to school - costs associated with uniforms and school trips.
 - Parents do not feel listened to or supported
 - Concerns about children's anxiety and addiction to devices
 - More than 2.8m children have experienced bullying
 - 740,000 children have self harmed at least once
 - 875,000 children do not have age appropriate books at home. Libraries and access to books is an important factor when considering literacy levels.
- **Hackney Parent/Carer Engagement work to date**
 - Hackney is one of the most deprived boroughs and a few challenges include falling rolls and deficit budgets. Barriers can be difficult to overcome, however, almost 40 schools engaging with support including a personalised audit and have had bespoke plans built
 - [Toolkit](#) available for everybody, signpost to schools
 - Improving behaviour, wellbeing, achievements
 - 12 schools received whole school CPD
 - Free School Meals voucher support
 - Revised complaints policy and training
 - Tracking of complaints linked to complaints
 - STEEP (Social, Technical, Educational, Environmental and Psychological) analysis to really help understand what the barrier are for parents and carer and co-produce solutions and recommendations
 - Draft policy coming on effective parent carer engagement
 - Transition and community cohesion support for school estates work once schools have closed/merged
 - Developing case studies and sharing good practice
 - Wider work with poverty reduction, anti racism, police, youth justice,
 - SEND parent/carer forums, exclusions
- Hackney's offer to schools is assisting with CPD, effective parents engagement, how to be a welcoming school, how to have conversations with parents and carers, and complaints training for leaders and governors
- Access to the [toolkit](#), audit, action plan and bespoke and responsive support, team is happy to take calls/answer emails and signposting about specific issues.
- **Governance responsibilities (whole school approach and direct engagement)**
 - What does your school define as effective parental engagement?
 - Do you have a parental engagement strategy and how effectively does that inform the ethos?

- How do you know your local community, the challenges they have and the barriers to effective engagement? How does the school overcome these?
- How do you know how well your school is engaging all families?
- How do you get stakeholder feedback so you can challenge and question from an informed position?
- How are staff supported to develop effective practice?
- [Training: Stakeholder engagement and complaints: how do schools ensure effective engagement with stakeholders and effectively manage complaints?](#)
- Please contact [Laura Stagg](mailto:Laura.Stagg@hackney.gov.uk) directly for any further questions on: Laura.Stagg@hackney.gov.uk

See [slides](#) 37 - 44 (Video section **1:12:23 - 1:26:22**)

HIGHLIGHT OF TRAINING & GUIDANCE FOR GOVERNORS - HEADLINES

Spring Term Training:

- Tue, 27th February, 9.00 - 11.00am or Wed, 15th June, 5.00 - 7.00pm: [How do schools ensure effective engagement with stakeholders and effectively manage complaints?](#)
- Thu, 7th March, 5.00 - 7.00pm: [The ethical decisions and statutory guidance that underpin the suspension and exclusion process](#)
- Wed, 6th March, 5.00 - 6.30pm: [What do governors need to know about the Ofsted inspection process?](#)
- Tue, 12th March, 5.00pm - 7.00pm: [How do we safeguard our children including those from Black and Global Majority communities?](#)
- Tue, 26th March, 5.00pm - 7.00pm: [How do we ensure an inclusive approach for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\)?](#)

Summer Term Training:

- Wed, 17th April, 5.00pm - 6.00pm: [How do governing boards observe Key Stage 2 Test \(SATs\) Administration to assure best practice?](#)
- Thu, 25th April, 5.00pm - 7.00pm: [How do governors fulfil their professional and ethical responsibility?](#)
- Thu, 2nd May, 5.00pm - 7.00pm: [How do we govern financial performance and ensure money is well spent?](#)
- Tue, 14th May, 9.00am to 11.00am: [How do we ensure the development of emotional, mental health and wellbeing of children?](#)
- Tue, 21st May, 9.00am - 11.00am: [The ethical decisions and statutory guidance that underpin the suspension and exclusion process](#)
- Wed, 5th June, 5.00 - 7.00pm: [How do schools ensure effective engagement with stakeholders and effectively manage complaints?](#)
- Tue, 13th June, 5.00pm - 7.00pm: [How do we safeguard our children including those from Black and Global Majority communities?](#)
- Tue, 13th June, 9.00am - 11.00am: [How do we ensure an inclusive approach for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\)?](#)

<p>People</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governor focus: attendance - new report published by ImpactEd Evaluation reveals intersectional factors are among the key drivers of low attendance. Examples: female pupils who are eligible for Pupil Premium & have a special educational need / the sense of school belonging/ year seven to eight transition year. • Governor focus: pupil and staff wellbeing - emotional or physical violence from a pupil experienced by 1 in 5 staff members during the academic year 22-23, according to a new report by Edurio. • Governor focus: Gender pay gap reporting Any organisation with 250 or more employees is required to report and publish data about its gender pay gap. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Publish gender pay gap data on the school/trust website ○ Report data to the government online ○ Keep this information online for a minimum of 3 years • Governor focus: review staffing changes
<p>Strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governor focus: FINANCES - Evaluate financial benchmarking data and conduct budget review and approval.
<p>Regulatory Changes & Compliance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OFSTED Inspection Handbooks - updates: a new section providing clarity on the pausing policy (para. 93) and more clarity on involving leaders / governors in the inspections. • Digital Standards Guidance (DfE) - new guidance on digital leadership and governance standards in schools (from physical IT assets to cyber security and digital licences and subscriptions). 3 recommendations for governing boards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital link role to a particular governor or trustee. • Risk management plans to include digital risks & be scrutinised by the board. • Senior leaders to create a digital strategy plan & review it annually / board challenge • Governor focus: website compliance <p>ACADEMY TRUSTS: Handbook changes from September 2023 move away from Governance Handbook for descriptions of quality governance, & looser requirements for meeting frequency & sharing management accounts with the trust board.</p>
<p>Crisis Management & Resilience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider a school sustainability link governor role.
<p>Stakeholder Engagement & Communication</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to keynote presentation

See [slides](#) 45 - 48

RELEVANT LINKS

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

- [Review by Shekeila Scarlett - Chair of governors, Stoke Newington School and Sixth Form](#)
- [Disadvantaged parents in England and Wales rule out Stem jobs for children, charity says](#)
- [FPH and partners launch new report on Good Food For Children](#)
- [UK Poverty 2024 - The Essential Guide to Understanding Poverty in the UK](#)
- [Inequality In Early Years Education](#)
- [Lack Of Policy Action Risks Widening Attainment Gap And Worsening The Quality Of Education For All Young Children](#)
- [London's Inclusion Charter - keeping children in school](#)

2. Enabling achievement

- [Girls outperform boys from primary school to university](#)
- ['Beyond Ofsted' - what does it mean for school and trust governance?](#)

3. Assuring provision for Pupils with SEND

- [Children with complex needs can wait years for a stable home](#)
- [Support strengthened for children with SEND](#)
- [Alternative provision needs urgent reform to help children and young people](#)
- [Alex Yates shares experiences about the Konstam Children Centre in Highgate](#)

4. Sustainable school systems

- [The Current State of Professional Development for Teachers](#)
- [Workload Reduction Taskforce](#)
- [Staying ahead: How the best CEOs continually improve performance](#)
- [Demand for school places is decreasing across the capital. Find out the challenges associated with this decline, and how local government can support schools.](#)
- [London secondary schools threatened by falling rolls](#)

5. Safeguarding, wellbeing and pastoral provision

- [Report 1 - Understanding Attendance: Findings on the drivers of pupil absence from over 30,000 young people in England](#)
- [Ofsted and Government must rebuild trust and make major changes to school inspections, Education Committee says](#)
- [The Children's Commissioner's view on artificial intelligence \(AI\)](#)
- [Disposable vapes banned to protect children's health](#)