

Chair of Governors Update: 20 March 2025

Dear Colleagues,

At last week's Governors Forum, Kate Cracknell's spotlight on Safeguarding emphasized how this theme permeates all aspects of our work. She questioned whether governors have sufficient opportunities to engage with and observe the children in our school, highlighting the necessity of understanding our school and ensuring that the child's best interests are central to all that we do. The information shared, along with the [Hackney Education Safeguarding Guidance for Governors](#), aims to encourage everyone to take a deeper look at how we prioritize the safety and wellbeing of children in providing the best possible education.

Jason Marantz provided updates, including the progress of the new Hackney Education strategy. This strategy will involve further engagement with various stakeholders, including leaders, governors, and parents. Additional details can be found in [this letter](#) sent to chairs of governors.

Jason also emphasized one of our key priorities: ensuring that our family of schools and settings are strong, sustainable, and financially viable. Chairs and leaders from all settings will receive letters outlining how we plan to engage people in a collective effort to sustain an education system that serves the needs of all Hackney children.

The [video](#), [slide deck](#), and notes below provide further information that was shared about upcoming changes to Ofsted inspections and advice on managing complex complaints.

On a final note, I am delighted to announce our Hackney Annual Governors' Conference, '**Keeping Our Community at the Heart of a Thriving Educational Future**' (working title), on **Thursday 22nd May from 16:00-19:00 at Hackney Town Hall**. Register [here](#) to secure your free place. This conference will explore how we can develop a sustainable educational ecosystem that supports all children and young people from early childhood into adulthood.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the Chairs Update, find time to enjoy the beginning of spring, and extend our joyful wishes to those celebrating Ramadan!

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 13th March. The event focused on the following key areas:

- Sharing Headlines/ best practice from our chairs and leader
- Behaviour, Wellbeing and Safeguarding
- Managing Complex Complaints
- (The [slide deck](#) and [video](#) from last week's event)

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

- Thursday 22 May 2024 - **Governors Annual Conference** (In Person: Hackney Town Hall)
- Thursday 27 June 2024 - **Governors Forum** (Virtual)

We also remind you of our previous [updates and tools](#), our [Governors' Training Programme 24/25](#) 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.

NATIONAL AND LOCAL UPDATES

Director, Hackney Education - Jason Marantz

Patrick Alexander - Assistant Director for School Performance & Improvement

Hackney Education Strategy

- Work is ongoing to develop a new strategy for Hackney Education. The latest draft version of Hackney Education's vision statement can be found [here](#).
- Next Stages:
 - Spring 2025: Plans drafted, revised version shared in series of stakeholder events for workshopping and discussion.
 - Spring / Summer 2025: launch of consultation and engagement period to discuss with stakeholders.
 - Autumn 2025: revised strategy shared and published for formal consultation.
 - Spring 2026: Feedback from engagement and consultation "You Said, We Did" report.

Letter to Schools: Sustaining a Strong and Financially Viable Education System

- Sustaining a strong and financially viable education system is a key strategic priority for Hackney Education
- We are aware that schools are facing financial difficulties due to declining pupil numbers, rising costs, and the increasing expense of meeting children's needs.
- We are sharing a letter with all settings outlining what is being asked of leaders and governing boards to support our collective drive for a sustainable education system.

Additional DfE Guidance and Reports

- DfE: School food standards updated [guidance](#), including pilot online training for governors to understand their responsibilities regarding school food
- DfE: Education for wellbeing programme findings - a series of [reports](#)
- DfE: Alternative provision updated statutory guidance statutory [guidance](#)
- National Foundation for Educational Research: [Exploring the Special Schools Workforce](#)

See [slides](#) 3 - 13 ([video](#) min 2:38)

Ofsted Inspections - Areas of focus

- The new inspection areas for Ofsted will be as follows: *Leadership and governance; Curriculum; Developing teaching; Achievement; Behaviour and attitudes; Attendance; Personal development and well-being; Inclusion; Safeguarding; Early years in schools (where applicable); Sixth form in schools (where applicable)*
- **Ratings** - The following ratings (not gradings!) will be applied to schools:
 - **Causing concern (red)**: needs urgent action to provide a suitable standard of education for children and learners
 - **Attention needed (amber)**: some aspects of provision are inconsistent, limited in scope or impact and/or not fully meeting legal requirements or non-statutory guidance expectations. However, inspectors think leaders "have the capacity to make necessary improvements"
 - **Secure (light green)**: offering a "secure standard of education" by meeting the above standards
 - **Strong (green)**: practice is "consistently secure across different year groups and subjects". Leaders "working above and beyond" what's expected
 - **Exemplary (dark green)**: all evaluation areas are graded at least secure and, in an area that is "consistently strong", there is "a feature of practice that could be considered as exemplary"

Please see [slide 9](#) for a graphic of the new provider evaluation scorecard.

Other key changes:

- **No more Ungraded Inspections** - from November, all inspections will be 'full' inspections.
- **Frequency of full inspections**- currently every four years, Ofsted has stated if this will change
- **Context and Data** - plans are in place to "summarise" information on schools and the local area alongside the report card. This would include: characteristics of children including disadvantage and

those with SEND; performance outcomes and trends; absence and attendance; local area data and relevant characteristics of the local community.

- **Toolkits** - Ofsted will publish toolkits for each evaluation area to “take any mystery out of inspection, and clarify what inspectors will and, importantly, will not look at”.
- Conversations will start with leaders’ “self- evaluation” of their provision, with reference to published data and professional standards
- **Inclusion and Outcomes** - will have more focus rather than curriculum
- **Schools can nominate another person** other than the headteacher as the point of all contact

See [slides](#) 7 - 13 ([video](#) min 7:50)

SPOTLIGHT ON EQUITY: BEHAVIOUR, WELLBEING AND SAFEGUARDING

Kate Cracknell - Head of Wellbeing & Education Safeguarding

Governance of Safeguarding

All governors have a responsibility to:

- Make sure a senior member of staff is appointed as a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- Make sure that all staff within the school have read part 1 of KCSIE and to have read part 1 and part 2 themselves
- Make sure all school staff receive up-to-date safeguarding training at least every two years.
- Have policies and procedures in place that support safeguarding that include policies on Child Protection, Behaviour and Wellbeing (both staff and students) Attendance and Safer Recruitment
- Further details can be found here: [Hackney Education Safeguarding Guidance for Governors](#)

Being a good link safeguarding governor:

- Know your school
- In everything everyone does, and every policy and process, the child’s best interests must be at the heart
- Attend specific training on delivering good governance of safeguarding (‘just’ safeguarding training isn’t specific enough for you)
- Use [Hackney Education Safeguarding Guidance for Governors](#) to support you and your governance team
- Record everything you do – conversations, emails, checks, and audits, everything!

Accident Reporting in Schools

- School staff have a duty to ensure that all accidents and near misses that happen to children in a period when they are in their care, are reported as soon as is practicable, however minor.
- Statutory guidance for schools around reporting accidents is [here](#)
- Please see [slide 24](#) for further details.

Key Changes in the Last Year that it’s Important to Bear in Mind

- [Children's Wellbeing and Schools' Bill](#) - not been passed yet but very likely will be. There is a strong focus on children out of schools
- The bill follows on from revised statutory guidance around attendance that came into effect from August 2024 via [Working together to improve school attendance](#)
- [Hackney's local attendance guidance is here](#) (it touches on pupils out of school, and sits at the centre of our pupils out of schools work).
- Further key sources of Information for School Staff and Governors can be found on [slide 25](#)

Children's Social, Emotional and Mental Health in Hackney

- There has only been one primary permanent exclusion in the last 5 years. And none so far for this year
- In 22/23 there were 33 exclusions from Hackney secondary schools and no exclusions from Hackney primary schools
- The permanent exclusion rate in Hackney secondary schools in 2022/23 was 0.22, the same rate as national (PEx rate for England is 0.22) and above Inner London (0.10)
- It is anticipated that the permanent exclusion rate for Hackney 2023/24, when verified by the DfE, will be higher than 22/23.
- The suspension rate in Hackney secondary schools is 17.62 in 2022/23, under the national rate of 18.90. This is the first time the suspension rate in Hackney secondary schools is below the national level in the seventeen years since the DfE began reporting suspensions in this way.
- 24/25 local data shows that the exclusion rate is reducing this term so far.

Attendance - Spring term DfE Data 24/25

Hackney Secondary schools:

- Academies: Overall attendance is 93.2% which is 1.3% higher than the national average
- Maintained: Overall attendance is 91.9% which is the same as the national average

Hackney Primary schools:

- Academies: Overall attendance is 95.7% (0.9% higher than the national average)
- Maintained: Overall attendance is 94.4% (0.4% below the national average)

National Attendance Headlines:

DfE Attendance Data for the week commencing 10 February 2025

- 5.9% in state-funded primary schools (4.4% authorised and 1.6% unauthorised)
- 9.5% in state-funded secondary schools (5.9% authorised and 3.6% unauthorised)
- 14.2% in state-funded special schools (10.8% authorised and 3.5% unauthorised)

Governor Discussion

Governors discussed the following questions at the forum on 13th March:

- How many opportunities have you had in the last three terms to speak to, and consult with, the children that attend your school?
- Do you do it enough?
- What have you learned from the children?
- How have you used this knowledge to shape their school?
- Is there anything you will do differently after thinking about this aspect of your role (you can say no!)

A summary of the discussion can be found [here](#).

See [slides](#) 14 - 31 ([video](#) min 15:00)

MANAGING COMPLEX COMPLAINTS

Laura Stagg - Parent Engagement System Leader
Madalina Brockmann- Governance Services Manager

Context

- There has been a large national rise in complaints towards schools, with a 65% increase since the pandemic.
- In February, the Education Secretary voiced concerns during a webinar about complaints.

- Eight out of ten heads nationally have seen a rise in vexatious complaints.

Concerns and Complaints Auditing Tool

- Hackney Education have developed a concerns and complaints health check auditing tool for schools. The tool uses a rag rating and encourages schools to reflect on the following five themes in relation to their concerns and complaints policy: *Policy; Training and understanding; Reviewing concerns and complaints; Governance Ethos and culture*
- Please see [slide 33](#) for a visual representation. The tool will be shared with schools in the next few weeks.

Complex Cases

- For complex cases the first thing to consider is as follows: Is it even a complaint under the School's Complaints Procedure? (IN SCOPE). A list of what the DfE considers to be outside the scope of the complaints process can be found on [slide 36](#).
- Guidance on scoping a potential complaint and all of the factors to consider in setting out a plan to deal with it, are outlined in detail on [slides 36-38](#).
- For complex cases, a sequencing tool has been developed, which guides leaders through different stages of the process and breaks potential cases down into categories. This can be found on [slide 39](#).

Training and Policies

- For Stakeholder Engagement and Complaints training email cpdadmin@hackney.gov.uk or book here <https://hackneyeducation.bookinglive.com/book/add/p/900/>
Next training: 19th March 9:00 - 11:00 am
- For bespoke in-house training for staff and governors, including case and policy review email madalina.brockmann@hackney.gov.uk or laura.stagg@hackney.gov.uk
- [Hackney model complaints policy](#)

A Reminder: The Duty of the Local Authority and DfE Intervention

- The duty for local authorities to consider complaints about the curriculum was removed by Section 45 of the Education Act 2011, and governing bodies should confirm with the local authority before including such information in their complaint procedures.
- The Department for Education (DfE) will intervene only when a governing body or local authority fails to follow education law or acts unreasonably in education-related functions, typically using powers under the Education Act 1996.

See [slides](#) 32 - 42 ([video](#) min. 49:23)

HIGHLIGHT OF TRAINING & GUIDANCE FOR GOVERNORS - HEADLINES

GUIDANCE

- [Hackney Education Safeguarding Guidance for Governors](#)

TRAINING

Financial Sustainability and Management of Risk

Tuesday, 25th March 2025

Tuesday, 8th April 2025

Wednesday 7th May 2025

4:00 - 5:00pm

Online

Booking Link: <https://hackneyeducation.bookinglive.com/book/add/p/928>

How does the Chair of Governors shape strong governance and what is distinct about this role?

Wednesday, 26th March 2025

9:00 - 11:00am

Online

Booking Link: <https://hackneyeducation.bookinglive.com/book/add/p/639>

E-Learning (these will be added to our platform as and when they are complete):

- **Equity over Equality: Exclusions:** **Maddie Brockmann**
[The ethical decisions and statutory guidance that underpin the suspension and exclusion process \(Free\)](#)
- **Ofsted:** **Calvin Henry**
[What do governors need to know about the Ofsted inspection process?](#)
- **Statutory training for all Governors:**
James Sykes
[How do we safeguard our children including those from Black and Global Majority communities?](#)
- **Finance:** How do we govern financial performance and ensure money is well spent? **(Free)**
- **Performance management of Headteachers (please contact cpdadmin@hackney.gov.uk for access):**
[What do governors need to know to ensure the performance management of the headteacher leads to school improvement?](#)
- **Equity over Equality: SEND**
How do we ensure an inclusive approach for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)? **(Free)**

RELEVANT LINKS

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

- [The We Society: Podcast S7 Ep6: Improving social mobility through education and language with Lee Elliot Major](#)
- [School governance: Driving change through diverse leadership](#)
- [Reflecting our communities: The push for diversity in school governance](#)
- [How to start tackling governance's diversity problem](#)
- [School exclusions case confirms 'substance over form' is key](#)
- [What makes a great alternative provision?](#)
- [Ensuring youth voice is at the heart of reforms to the Special Educational... | Dame Rachel de Souza](#)
- [Unequal Treatment? Access to medicine for socio-economically disadvantaged students](#)
- [DEI in school governance: Interview with Chiltern Learning Trust leadership](#)
- [Many pupils in poverty missing out on free school meals](#)

2. Enabling achievement

- [Local Disadvantage Gaps in England - Education Policy Institute](#)
- [We want high standards for all young people, not some](#)
- [The educational journeys of children in secure settings](#)
- [Schools Week on LinkedIn: We can't close the disadvantage gap if we don't know what drives it](#)

3. Assuring provision for Pupils with SEND

- [Identifying SEND - Education Policy Institute](#)
- [Our new framework takes us beyond piecemeal SEND reform](#)
- [Ten principles for a new SEND system](#)

4. Sustainable school systems

- [Reforming Accountability - Education Policy Institute](#)
- [Calls for school complaints review as 80% of leaders abused](#)
- [Asking challenging questions | National Governance Association](#)

5. Safeguarding, wellbeing and pastoral provision

- [City of London and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership \(CHSCP\)](#)
- [CHSCP Things You Should Know \(TUSK\) briefing which features publication of the Case A Report](#)
- [Mental health schemes led to 'emotional difficulties'](#)
- [Race, racism and safeguarding children](#)
- [STATE OF PLAY An interim report from the Raising the Nation Play Commission](#)
- [Crisis of school absenteeism' affecting poorer pupils the most, new data suggests](#)
- [The collective will to unite, educate, and empower: it takes a whole community to raise a child](#)
- [DfE attendance tsar urges schools to focus on occasional absentees](#)