

Chair Of Governors Update

Wednesday, 10 March 2021

Dear colleagues

The reopening of schools to all our children and young people marks a significant first step for the national easing of lockdown. We are all pleased to hear our schools reporting high levels of attendance, with pupils delighted to reconnect and re-engage in shared learning experiences with their peers.

We recognise the many logistical challenges faced by our schools in dealing with testing, face coverings, cancellation of exams to be replaced with a system based on teachers' grades, as well as preparing for any further closures. However, we also know that our school leaders will not let the impact of this pandemic adversely affect what is being termed 'The Lost Generation'. All our schools have a fantastic opportunity to embrace what has been learned in educating children during the past year and use this to further strengthen our education system for the benefit of all.

In this update, we highlight key matters shared at the extraordinary governors forum last week. We have cross referenced these with our Roadmap for Continuing Strategic Governance in 20/21, in order to reflect the strategic framework supporting the thinking behind all the themes. The key principles for our pupils in this third school return remain:

- **Engaging all children and their families;** paying particular attention to engaging pupils who are self isolating and learning remotely
- **Ensuring the highest possible attendance;**
- **Ensuring routines and safety systems** are clear and reinforced, with reasonable adjustments for individuals;
- **Giving pupils the opportunity to reflect and talk** about their experiences
- **Providing a good education offer** for all pupils, including any still engaged in remote learning

We will be hosting our next **Hackney Governors Virtual forum on 24 March 2021**, when we will reflect further on how our schools are managing and, how our school leaders and staff are developing a high quality teaching and a rich curriculum that encompasses recovery from the impact of this pandemic.

We hope this update will help you in supporting your school leaders and navigate the governance of schools as the nation slowly unlocks and resumes daily life. We remind you of our previous updates and tools, our 2020/21 training programme and 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.

In the meantime, if you have any query regarding governance, no matter how small, or you wish to find out how our services can support your school, we encourage you to get in touch as it will be our pleasure to help.

Sincerely

Maggie Kalnins, Leader of Governance Services

Key Matters Shared at the Virtual Governors Forum on 4 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 4 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

Covid Cases are below 60 per 100,000 in Hackney. Whilst the return of the children to school does bring more people together, changes have been put in place to make it a **safe return**. Hackney published this **Reopening guidance for Hackney schools**.

Remote learning has improved for the children.

The roll out of the vaccination will protect the more vulnerable of Hackney residents. There are staff vaccinations being offered for a few settings, generally for children's centres and schools involved in offering personal care and this is a gradual process being offered in collaboration with Homerton Hospital.

Lateral flow testing has been set up and secondary schools are having ongoing tests whilst some pilot schemes are being run for primary school students and staff. Staff from primary and secondary schools and secondary school pupils will be tested twice a week.

Notification of confirmed positive COVID-19 cases in schools and settings: To make notifying Hackney Education easier, we have updated the online COVID-19 notification form

This is **the third return to school** since the partial re-opening in May and September last year. There will be some temporary, local, operational issues such as the inclusion of the extra 1.5 million people in the shielding category which may affect front line staff numbers.

Risk assessments will need to be reviewed and shared with key stakeholders to ensure that existing controls are effective prior to all pupils returning to school.

The common approach for the return to school is to reassure pupils and parents and make sure as many return as early as possible, to reinforce and remind them about safety routines and reintroduce the full curriculum with a full time table including supporting tuition groups.

The final priorities are giving pupils the opportunity to reflect and talk about their experiences, stresses and strains over the past few months, coping with the challenges and being able to talk about it, the promotion of positive well being and health, and for any pupils still engaged in remote learning that they are still in receipt of a good offer.

Forward planning for hopefully a more usual academic year from September should include considering the school's current situation and plans for moving forward. Many head teachers and Senior Leadership Teams are already thinking about this and have been planning improvements and new ways of doing things.

Contingency planning is still required as bubbles may be sent home and individual staff members may not be available, therefore the remote learning offer needs to stay in place. Regarding face coverings, primary children are not required to wear them however in secondary school there is an expectation that pupils there will and this is due to reducing the infection rate and making sure that where social distancing is not possible it is mitigated by wearing a mask. (*Virtual Forum For Hackney Governors Slides p16-17*)

Relevant Announcements & Reports

ASSESSMENTS

- **Secondary school Governors must be aware of summer assessments for Years 11, 12 and 13**, this will be on the Governing Body's agenda and there is plenty of guidance and some forums coming up about it. Progression for these pupils will have been hugely complicated this year especially if they plan to move to go to Sixth Form. Both Hackney Colleges are interviewing on a continual basis if this is where pupils are considering going. **Hackney Education is supporting moderating assessments** at primary level and head teachers will have received this information from Jason Marantz , Senior Primary Advisor.
- **The DfE has published plans for 2021 grades** It covers arrangements for undertaking assessments, quality assurance and appeals processes and awarding process for vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) and other general qualifications.
- **EEF research analysis of closure impact on KS1 pupils in maths and reading assessments**

REMOTE LEARNING

- **Ofsted have published the outcomes of research into remote education.** The full report can be found here. In summary the report finds that: One measure of how effective remote learning has been will be upon the children's return, in relation to how much learning loss there has been and how much catch up is required. Many schools have delivered a very strong, well received and well attended remote learning offer. The main challenges for learning remotely show that lack of internet access does not feature and whilst this might be the result of the survey format, lack of contact with others and lack of focus on learning can be resolved by pupils returning to school although these learning routines will also require some getting used to.
- Ofsted has published new information on **how remote education is working for children and young people with SEND**. Their findings are taken from the autumn and spring term interim visits.
- **EEF Publication: Best Evidence on Remote Learning - Published 8 January 2021**
- **Juniper Education National Dataset Report - Summary:** The Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on primary school children's learning. (*Virtual Forum For Hackney Governors Slides p11-12*)
- **Ofsted report on pupil motivation as part of home education : Published 25 January**
- **Ofsted Inspection Data Summary Report (IDSR) Updated 22 January 2021** : Ofsted re-released the inspection data summary report (IDSR)
- **EPI report: Young People's mental and emotional health**

TESTING, FACE COVERING AND VACCINATION

- **Dfe guidance on face coverings: when to wear one, exemptions, and how to make your own.**
- **FAQs for Asymptomatic Testing** in Primary Schools, School-Based Nurseries and Local Authority Maintained Nurseries: Primary schools / nurseries who are part of the national home testing programme; Secondary & special schools and colleges testing programme
- **Vaccination Lesson Plans from Hackney were launched on 8 Feb 2021** Public Health England commissioned a set of resources for pupils KS2, KS3 and KS4 pupils to help them educate pupils with hope this will improve community understanding of the importance of vaccination. Hackney Education colleagues and secondary colleagues from Stoke Newington School helped prepare the resources.

ATTENDANCE

- **Completion of the Educational Setting Status form:** As children return to school the numbers attending will be of both national and local interest. The educational setting status form allows national and local data sets to be compiled and inform planning.
- **Plans to extend the school day are being considered by the government**

COMPLIANCE AND VISIBILITY

- **Safeguarding policy:** The government's Contingency Framework says, 'Schools and FE providers (ideally led by the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or a deputy) should review their child protection policy so that it reflects the local restrictions and remains effective.
- **What maintained schools and academies must publish online:** Templates have been made available for maintained schools and academies.
- **Visible Governance in Schools** campaign, we have created a list of practical things you can do at home, at work and in your school or trust to help raise the visibility of governance.

Governor Training - hosted virtually:

- **What do Governors Need to Know about the Ofsted Inspection Process?**
Date/time: Thursday, 18 March 2021, 6.pm to 8.pm
- **Safeguarding: How do Governors Fulfil their Responsibility to Safeguard and Protect Children?** Date/time: Thursday, 1 April 2021, 6.pm to 8.pm

Theme 3: Staffing matters

Key Matters Shared at the Virtual Governors Forum:

There is significant support available to staff in terms of wellbeing from Public Health and more still being rolled out, including ongoing questionnaires. This feedback should be reviewed, particularly as there is some anxiety about staff returning to work so this ongoing dialogue is important.

The Employee Assistance Programme provides counselling for staff for private and professional issues. The Easter holiday is three weeks away which will provide some rest for staff and leaders although some schools will be providing holiday activities. *(Virtual Forum For Hackney Governors Slides p20)*

Relevant Announcements & Reports:

- **Hackney Education staff and other stakeholders visiting schools and settings:** Following the Government's announcement of a third period of National lockdown and the Government guidance: Restricting attendance during the national lockdown: schools, the Government advises against Educational visits. The guidance states 'supply teachers, peripatetic teachers and other temporary staff can move between schools.'
- **The Guidance for Hackney Education staff visiting schools and early years settings during the coronavirus pandemic** has been updated and recommends that visits to schools and early years settings by Hackney Education staff and other stakeholders are only carried out if they are essential, unable to be carried out using alternative methods e.g. virtually and carried out in line with the Guidance
- **Wellbeing for Education Return resources are now available for education staff** who do not have access to locally adapted training and support, or to supplement existing local offers. These include a short, recorded webinar - 'Every interaction matters'
- **Survey for clerks and governance professionals on careers and development**

Theme 4: Inequality and community cohesion

Relevant Announcements & Reports:

- The Sutton Trust has published **Learning in Lockdown** setting out the impact COVID-19 has had on learning, especially for disadvantaged children and young people

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?** Date/time: Thursday, 25 March 2021, 9.am to 11.am

Theme 5: Financial management matters

Key Matters Shared at the Virtual Governors Forum:

All maintained schools' budgets were issued on Friday 26 February 2021 with the exception of maintained nursery and special schools budgets which will be sent out on or before 10 March 2021. Budgets for this year must be considered in terms of the costs and impact of Pandemic for the current year. Many schools may have experienced a reduction in supply staff, maintenance and energy bills during closure to the majority of pupils during the financial year of 2020-2021. But now, in preparation of wider closure, savings could be offset by cleaning and other infection control measures. Some schools and academies rely heavily on income from hire outs and fundraising events and could see a significant cash funding shortfall resulting in financial hardship.

However, **the budget planning process should remain the same** as it was before the pandemic and involves measuring your current curriculum, staffing structure and finances, and using the data to create a 3- to 5-year plan. (The **Integrated curriculum and financial planning (ICFP)** offers guidance on Linking curriculum and financial planning).

First, schools should assume that they will be operating at full capacity in terms of pupil and staff numbers. Second, staffing costs are unlikely to be greatly affected as they should remain the same regardless of whether staff and pupils are working on site or remotely although staff absences might impact costs to some extent. And finally, individual schools' 2021-2022 delegated budgets funded by the DfE have not been impacted by the effects of Coronavirus and are broadly in line with the anticipated settlement.

The deadline for submitting the schools' budget to Hackney Education is 3 May 2021 and must include the aforementioned three year forecast. The government recognises the restraints school face, and without complete information about future school funding governors will not be able to see emerging issues and take appropriate mitigating action.

Governors must engage in informed discussions about the assumptions, both known and unknown, made as part of the three year planning process. This must also be based on strategic information in order to present the most informed picture of the financial landscape. If ignored, the impact of changes in funding and pupil numbers can cause schools to go into deficit. Government meetings are still being held virtually. There are challenges around budget planning but **support is available through Hackney Education's Finance Team.**

Recovery Funding amount is not known exactly at present but likely to be within the next 2-6 weeks and once funding is received it will be distributed immediately.

Relevant Announcements & Reports:

- **DfE set out £700m catch-up funding plans Recovery premium:** The DfE has now clarified that the Government recovery premium funding for state primary and secondary schools will be based on the number of children eligible for the pupil premium at each school and be worth £6,000 to the average primary school and £22,000 to the average secondary. (*Virtual Forum For Hackney Governors Slides p13-14*)
- **Free school meals and holiday activity and food programmes,** there will be another week's worth of vouchers from the Covid winter grant for children entitled to free school meals and we hope that there will be money for the Easter holidays although the details are not yet known.
- **Schools financial benchmarking – the role of governance (with Better Governor)** - provides guidance on how financial benchmarking should be used by governors to discharge their duty in overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.



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

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