### **Chair Of Governors Update**

15 January 2021

#### Dear Colleagues,

At our extraordinary virtual forum last week, we were delighted to see over one hundred Hackney governors and leaders in attendance. This was testimony to the commitment and support to your schools, especially in the light of a landscape changing at an extremely rapid pace. The government U-turn announcement of 4 January to close schools as a last resort to combat the rapid spread of the Covid-19 virus required school leaders to alter plans swiftly, to ensure the continuity of provision by remote learning and the on-site education provision for vulnerable children and the children of Key Worker families. Strong governance in these extremely challenging times is what will make a difference in the quality of education for our children.

In this update, we reference key matters shared at the forum, which we hope will help you in supporting your school leaders and navigate the governance of schools. We have cross referenced these with our recently **updated** Roadmap for Continuing Strategic Governance in 20/21, (14 January 2021 version attached and available online) in order to better reflect the strategic framework supporting the thinking behind all the themes. The strategic focus points we suggest as a thread running through all themes are:

- How do the lessons learned from the 2020 experience of governing during the Covid-19 pandemic shape our strategic governance?
- How can we support senior leaders and staff to stay resilient and responsive in the face of challenges and rapid change?
- What do we still need to incorporate in our medium and long term strategic plans, and what resources do we need to achieve our goal
- Which pupil groups have been most impacted by schools closures and need to be a particular focus?
- What are our plans to address leadership challenges / support the longer term strategic recovery of our school?
- How do we employ expertise to ensure the long term strategic recovery of the school?

An **NEW Spring Governing Board Agenda Template** for your upcoming meetings is attached and also available here.

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, do get in touch as it will be our pleasure to help.

#### Key emerging matters:

- Current public health situation, last resort to close schools and new challenges for our school leaders associated with continuity of education
- How Hackney Education and the wider Council is supporting schools leaders, children and the community - particularly those most vulnerable and economically disadvantaged
- Highlights of the current situation/ expectations to remain open/ provide remote learning with reference to each setting, including Early Years
- Remote education ensuring quality and continuity of education, clarity and exceptions on website
- Examinations and SATs
- Disapplication of Ofsted inspections during the national lockdown
- Robustness of H&S procedures in making schools Covid safe

- Rapid testing and expectations for each school setting, including DBS checks for volunteers
- Staff wellbeing and guidance on shielding for clinically vulnerable staff

Sincerely, on behalf of Maggie Kalnins, Leader of Governance Services

## **Key Matters Shared at the Virtual Governors Forum on 7 January 2021**

Within these notes, we reference key matters shared at the Virtual Governors Forum on 7 January, highlight relevant announcements & reports, and signpost training opportunities. These are presented to complement the themes of the Roadmap for Continuing Strategic Governance which can be viewed here.

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

### Key matters shared at the Virtual Governors Forum on 7 January 2021

The Public Health Situation has experienced a U turn, following an intervention last week from Hackney Education Officers, Elected Members and the Mayor of Hackney. Their efforts ensured the views of schools were heard, which resulted in Hackney schools being closed in the light of high numbers of cases of Covid-19 in Hackney. The emergence of the new strain has increased infectiousness therefore we must all remain extremely cautious in our personal lives alongside school staff in their professional work. Vulnerable children and the children of Critical Workers will be attending school. This must be balanced with the safety of the children, their households and the staff in school. Several schools are capping the numbers of children in school.

The definition of Critical Workers has changed from that of Key Workers. Critical Workers now include a wider group of parents and vulnerable children include those who have problems with home learning, due to space or mental wellbeing. This has put pressure on Head Teachers to decide on eligibility.

**Ofsted reported in the Autumn term**, that some children are more affected and disadvantaged in this situation than others. Schools have got better at remote learning but as Governors the most vulnerable children must be held in mind.

Hackney Education and the wider council is supporting schools in joint collaboration with Young Hackney and the Children and Families Services to ensure schools can easily make referrals alongside receive advice. Information about free school meals has been shared, whilst there is some uncertainty about this as the Government have not specified the funding that they will be providing. Currently three routes for this provision exist: a hamper, vouchers, or the Eden Red Scheme. The Government's funding plans for this remains unconfirmed. Schools can directly order an allocation of laptops through the Government scheme. Details about the campaign for laptops donations can be found here. The local campaign requesting donations for equipment continues.

Schools must identify children that are not responding to remote learning, and invite them into school or provide them with the necessary access. The minimum standards regarding online learning have been updated to reflect three hours per day for Primary and four hours per day for Secondary as a minimum expectation. Expectations include video explanations, systems of checking how many pupils are responding and a means of assessing progress and attainment. Schools need to publish their approach to remote learning on their website.

Schools are reviewing risk assessments in terms of whether they are fit for purpose. The new infection rate is rising and there is a focus on social distancing, ventilation and the use of masks. The controls remain the same but their application in schools is being reviewed. There will not be any statutory examinations this year and we are waiting to hear whether teacher assessments will replace them, and in what form this will for Key Stages 1, 2, 4 and 5. Headteachers and staff members' wellbeing must remain at the forefront of Governors' minds.

Early Years are expected to remain open for all children, not just those of Critical Workers or for vulnerable children. However, school-based Nurseries can now restrict access in line with Primary schools in the areas of exceptional rates. This may have an impact on funding. Some settings rely on free entitlement funding and private fees from parents and the Covid Retention Scheme can be used more flexibly during this Lockdown in terms of the return to a normal funding approach.

The biggest increase in Covid cases is due to socialising but the numbers are changing on a daily basis. There is a huge increase in older people catching it elsewhere. 70% of these new cases are attributed to the new variant and children are carrying it asymptomatically and rarely getting significantly sick with it, but passing it on; in addition, there was quite a drop in testing over the Christmas period.

There is a strategy in place for all Secondary schools to implement lateral testing voluntarily, as it is not mandatory. Schools are typically keen to participate. There will be 13 Primary schools involved in a Pilot at the end of January which will be testing for teachers, school staff and Critical Workers' pupils who are currently at school and we will also move to Early Years settings, initially with one Children's Centre. There will be an easy to set up guide from Public Health. According to updated guidance any volunteers involved in the Pilot scheme must be DBS checked.

Schools need to identify a room for testing. Some schools are considering using Governors and parent volunteers. Schools must provide training. At full capacity, a large Secondary school would require a minimum of 20 trained volunteers. A project management style approach will be required from a paid member of school staff dedicated to managing the process. A pupil aged 12 years old and over will complete the testing themselves, the trained volunteer then completes the remaining testing procedure, the results will arrive within 30-40 minutes. Currently it is not possible to give test kits to parents in order for them to test their own families, however the Hackney website has details of several rapid testing centres.

Managing the testing process and how the bar codes / data is recorded and reported is up to the school. School nurses have been trained to support schools, they will observe how testing is performed and the clinical environment. The current package includes lateral tests, PCR tests for verifying positive lateral tests, and PPE. Additional costs will be incurred for screens around the desks, test tube holders and Public Health's

anticipated commissioning of a clinical waste provision. This will be substantial and hopefully will be covered by the grants but the details are not yet known.

Areas to focus on as identified by HSE inspections are social distancing within classrooms, particularly staff and back office areas, enhanced cleaning arrangements to include high touch surfaces, review of communications, re-emphasis of good hand and respiratory hygiene as well as opening windows and doors to ensure good general levels of ventilation. Schools have been asked to provide reviewed risk assessments to Health and Safety by 11 January for feedback. There is guidance on requirements for facilitating shielding staff working at home.

**Risk assessment templates** provided by Health and Safety can be used as standalone risk assessments or as review guidance. The guidance last changed on 30 December 2020 (not significantly to the previous version / template).

THe Health and Safety team have used the Sage Guidance of 23 December 2020 to draft additional guidance for schools. In relation to the new variant, it focuses on reinforcing the hierarchy of control of all known routes which specifically close range, airborne and surface transmission and enhancing the mitigating factors, particularly use of the two metre rule, wearing of face coverings and enhanced ventilation.

**Further information is required regarding where numbers of children attending are high,** schools have to prioritise those who meet the widened Critical Worker and Vulnerable criteria. Information was sent out to Head Teachers about prioritising and there may need to be a rota to facilitate school attendance due to numbers. The vulnerable children are most important followed by children of Critical Workers with those of single parents the bigger priority. The salary of the Critical Worker is not a factor so there is complete equality between all.

#### **Relevant Announcements & Reports**

- EEF Blog: Five principles to support home learning
- NGA Chief Executive's annual address, NGA annual report and AGM
- <u>DfE school governance update:</u> The DfE has released their December <u>School governance update</u> which thanks those governing for their commitment and signposts vital resources which may be of interest.
- NAO publishes investigation of free school meals voucher scheme: The
   National Audit Office (NAO) has published their findings from an investigation
   into the free school meal (FSM) voucher scheme. In March, the DfE
   <u>announced</u> a national FSM voucher scheme with a contract to Edenred to
   administer the scheme. However, reports in April emerged indicating that
   schools and parents were struggling to access the scheme which triggered the
   report.
- Updated DfE guidance on Governor Meetings and visits to schools: A new
  edition of Governor Update on 2nd December. The Update contains guidance
  on Governing Body and Trust Board meetings, and the department's advice
  on governor visits to schools, during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic
- Four new Learning Link modules released:
  - 1. Holding to account: how to question and challenge
  - 2. Holding to account: how to conduct a courageous conversation
  - 3. Creating a new vision for your school or trust
  - 4. Using integrated curriculum and financial planning (ICFP)
- "Speak for Change' Oracy APPG Inquiry Interim Findings": Using evidence supplied by the Speak for Change Inquiry, CfEY wrote this interim report, which builds on the legacy of ours and Voice 21's 2016 State of Speaking

- <u>report.</u> The interim report highlights key themes arising from the APPG's investigating and emerging recommendations.
- **Get help with remote education:** The DfE has organised a resources website page to support school delivery of remote learning and signpost to <u>guidance</u>.
- Ofsted reflect on the year and announce inspection plan for 2021: The key findings are summarised below:
  - Nearly 2/3s of state schools inspected under the EIF kept the same overall effectiveness
  - A strong curriculum is underpinned by clear central aims and accountability, but also acknowledges that individual subjects require different approaches to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach
  - There are weaknesses in SEND provision overall
  - It has become more difficult to identify children's and families' need for early help and protection; instead, local authorities are more likely now to be responding to a legacy of abuse and neglect
- Regular Ofsted inspections will be suspended until the summer term 2021.
   Ofsted will conduct monitoring visits in schools graded 'inadequate' or 'requires improvement'.
- **Performance data:** The Government has announced changes to statutory assessments in 2021 due to the disruption caused by the pandemic.
  - There will be no school-level data from tests, exams and assessments published on performance tables for key stage two, key stage four or key stage five in 2021.
  - Instead, school-level information will be published on destination data for key stage four and key stage five, curriculum choices at key stage four and key stage five, and attendance for primary and secondary schools. The attendance data will be supported with contextual information and caveats.
  - The DfE will publish some national and regional statistics for key stages 2, 4 and 5.
  - Some school-level data will be provided in ASP and IDSR
- <u>Attendance Figures: Concerns Continue</u>: Think tank <u>FFT Datalab</u> published new <u>attendance analysis</u> showing national attendance as low as 84.6% on 10 December, compared to the average pre-pandemic of 95.3% across state schools <u>in 2018 to 2019</u>. A clear trend remains between a rising number of Covid Cases and decreasing school attendance.In January, The Difference/<u>Violence Reduction Unit</u> will be sharing attendance-raising strategies from across its network of schools serving excluded pupils.
- Attendance league tables will be 'relief map of pandemic'
- Ofsted Annual Report: Alternative Provision Attendance: Ofsted has published its latest annual report following a "year of two halves" which saw inspections temporarily paused just months after the launch of the new inspection framework. The report summarises school quality pre-lockdown and rounds up significant concerns about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Ofsted highlights attendance as a pivotal concern in Alternative Provision. The annual report states that despite "many good or outstanding" alternative provision settings, providers "all too often" fail to do enough to "make sure that all pupils attend school regularly" which leaves children at risk of underachievement and even criminal exploitation. The report indicates that in almost half of providers, staffing instability was a "significant issue", especially among leaders.
- National Tutoring Programme: Since 2 November, schools have been able to
  access subsidised tutoring from 33 organisations that have been selected by
  the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) through <a href="NTP Tuition Partners">NTP Tuition Partners</a>.
  This <a href="article">article</a> outlines how the EEF reached the 33 approved Tuition Partners

- and also <u>details</u> of what is available and how schools can access subsidised tuition from an approved list of providers.
- The Digital Divide: Closing the achievement gap in the connected classroom: Latest research in association with Microsoft found that there is a lack of access to technology in English state schools. Creating barriers to disadvantaged pupils learning. To mark the launch of the findings CfEY brought together a group of leading experts to discuss three key questions arising from the report. Which can be found on CfEY youtube.
- The Difference's Impact report 2019-2020: The Impact Report summarises impact across the first year of delivery in The Differences "viability pilot phase".

#### **Governor Training - hosted virtually**

- What do Governors Need to Know about the Ofsted Inspection Process? 25 January, 9 to 11.am
- Introduction How do Governors Fulfil their Professional and Ethical Responsibility?
  - 2 February, 9 to 11.am
- <u>Safeguarding: How do Governors Fulfil their Responsibility to Safeguard and Protect Children?</u> 3 February, 9 to 11.am
- <u>How do Governing Boards Strategically Assess and Manage Risks in their Schools?</u>
  - 23 February, 9 to 11.am
- <u>How do you Strengthen Governance through Effective Board</u>
  <u>Administration and Accountability 2 March, 9 to 11.am</u>
- What do Governors Need to Know about the Ofsted Inspection Process 18 March, 6 to 8.pm
- <u>Director's Termly Briefing with Governors and School Leaders</u> 24 March, 6 to 7.30.pm
- Safeguarding: How do Governors Fulfil their Responsibility to Safeguard and Protect Children? 1 April, 6 to 8.pm

#### Theme 3: Staffing matters

**Hackney HR support** for schools includes: HR and wellbeing guidance, and frequently asked questions; Employee Assistance Programme which is a free counselling service for all members of staff; supporting meetings and offering expert advice.

## Key matters shared at the Virtual Governors Forum on 7 January 2021

New guidance reinstates shielding for vulnerable staff, clarifying that they should be working remotely from home. If staff cannot perform duties from home, they will be paid under Special Leave. Prior to the decision to close Hackney schools, Section 44 letters drafted by Trade Unions were being circulated nationally amongst schools due to concerns about staff returning to school. Staff shared that they felt unsafe and would only return to work in schools in order to enable vulnerable and Key Workers' children to attend.

Human Resources Frequently Asked Questions with a template letter were sent out to support this change (available on the Services for Schools website). Governors may wish to check with Head Teachers to assess any challenges. Some staff have 'niche' roles that they cannot carry out at present, whilst there are more pupils currently in school than last April so more bubbles and staff are required to be on site. Some support staff may be asked to do slightly different roles. The wellbeing of all staff should be an agenda item for governing board meetings.

**Staff will have access to testing training provided by the DfE**. Training consists of a 30 minute video resulting in a certificate. Schools will have access to the video and can circulate it as they wish. School nurses may be involved in testing. However Information about the timing of rollout of the vaccination for teaching staff is not yet available.

#### **Relevant Announcements & Reports**

- Flexible working guidance updated: The DfE has updated their guidance on flexible working in schools. As the employer of staff, or the body exercising employer responsibility, governing boards should agree a policy for handling flexible working requests which reflects their school's ethos. Governors will also have to directly handle requests where they are made by the senior executive leader, and will hear appeals from more junior members of staff.
- Making Waves: Building a Better Future for Assessment: In 2017, CFEY and
  Pearson published 'Testing the Waters', a report showing that teachers had
  been left overwhelmed by the workload associated with assessment. 'Making
  Waves' is the follow-up, and focuses on the key issues of teacher workload
  and expertise. 10 innovative approaches were selected for close study and
  this report outlines the key findings and provides suggestions for teachers and
  schools.

#### **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?

 11 February, 6.pm to 8.pm

### Theme 4: Inequality and community cohesion

# Key matters shared at the Virtual Governors Forum on 7 January 2021

The definition of children allowed into school had widened, however the DfE attendance return has not yet come back. The methodology has been changed so accurate numbers are not possible but we understand there has been a general increase in numbers.

- Brief update on the progress made on equalities and anti-racism work across Hackney Council and Hackney Education:
  - Hackney Education statement regarding equalities and anti-racism commitment The statement sets out the expectation for all Hackney Education staff to be committed to this work.
  - Curriculum the <u>Hackney Diverse Curriculum</u> is a nine-week lesson plan spanning from Early Years to KS3 and Year 4 students. The resources focus on stories of empowerment lessons that pupils can be proud of.

- Parent's voice Parents from various schools in Hackney shared their views of how schools could improve children's sense of belonging and also highlighted schools' successes in this area.
- Pupils' voice There has been work on encapsulating pupils' voices to understand their lived experience of education in Hackney. In addition, there was an ambition to ensure young people's voices were represented in the governance of the Young Black Males project.
- Recruitment and retention HR has drafted a guidance which provides helpful reminders about inclusive recruitment practice; from thinking about where to advertise to reviewing the person specification. HR is also looking into development for retention and promotion of black, Asian and minority ethnic staff.
- o Inclusion champions taking forward the Corporate Equality Strategy
- oGovernors work is done to diversify governing boards in Hackney schools through providing training, involving them in discussions about diversity and through work with young leaders in Hackney to highlight the importance of young people's voices on governing boards.
- APPG for School Exclusions and Alternative Provision: The All-Party
   Parliamentary Group (APPG) on School Exclusions and Alternative Provision
   is a group of 11 MPs and Peers set up to improve outcomes for vulnerable children by facilitating upstream working to reduce preventable exclusions and improve the quality of education for children excluded from school. You can watch the full recording of the APPG meeting or access the minutes.
- Three ways for UK schools to improve their race relations now | Race in education | The Guardian
- NGA and BAMEed steering group on governance and race: One of the initiatives emerging from NGA's advisory group on <u>diversity and equalities</u> is a collaboration with <u>BAMEed</u> to set up a steering group on governance and race. Its purpose is 'making things happen on the ground' regarding improving diversity and ensuring the inclusivity of boards.
- Documentary Excluded: Young people from London and Scotland have spoken about the lasting impact school exclusions have had on their lives – and how they think the system needs to change – in a documentary by human rights charity <u>EachOther</u>. The documentary focuses on the voices and stories of young people whose experiences and views on school exclusions are wideranging. The trailer is out now.
- Diverse Educators: <u>The Research</u> will be sharing key research papers about diversity, equity and inclusion. <u>The Curriculum</u> a group of teachers and curriculum leaders passionate about diversifying the curriculum to build/share subject specific resource banks.
- "Disadvantage in early secondary school": New research with Manchester Metropolitan University and the Nuffield Foundation demonstrates that disadvantaged pupils' academic self confidence plummets after leaving primary school, positing that "disadvantaged pupils will benefit cost from efforts to make the transition between primary school and secondary school smoother"
- Why speaking matters: In our latest blog, Mary Myatt, Chair of CfEY's Board, emphasises the importance of speaking in schools and draws out key findings and recommendations from our report for the Oracy APPG.
- The Evidence Is in It's Time to Close the Digital Divide: In this blog Neil Bates, Chair of the Edge Foundation, discusses the impact of the digital divide on the attainment of disadvantaged students and calls on the sector to focus on evidence-based change.
- Generating political will for educational equity: When it's all true. But it's not all the truth: Chief Executive at CfEY, Loic Menzies outlines four key

lessons for anyone seeking to influence policy and secure educational equity, based on a roundtable he chaired involving senior policy makers and former ministers from around the world.

#### **Governor Training - hosted virtually**

- LGBT-inclusive training Find out more here.
- Diverse Educators Training: <u>Diversity in Schools Masterclass For Governors</u> 18 February 2021, 3 to 5pm
- <u>Tackling Inequalities: How can Governors Improve Outcomes for Those at</u>
   <u>Risk of Exclusion and What Should They Know Before Considering an Exclusion?</u>

   25 March 2021, 9 to 11.am

#### Theme 5: Financial management matters

## Key matters shared at the Virtual Governors Forum on 7 January 2021

**DfE-funded professional development for effective chairs, clerks and boards**: DfE funding for our <u>Leading Governance programmes</u> - only available until spring 2021. Please register by 12 March.

Local Authority funding for providers is expected to return to normal, based on the number of entitlement hours delivered, from the spring term funding will be paid for children claimed for and on roll according to the January census, whereas last year children were funded based on the 2019 cohort data set rather than the actuals, due to Covid-19. The Government now requires the Local Authorities to fund the actual number of hours delivered. This has implications given that Covid-19 is still current and infection rates continue increasing nationally. The funding will be clawed back based on attendance therefore the January census remains a critical period in terms of children who were offered places in the Autumn term taking up their places in the Spring term. If Nursery pupils are not on the school roll at the point of the January census, the school will not receive the 15 hour funded entitlement.

Some parents have decided to keep children at home which may delay starting. Ordinarily flexibility would be applied when looking at children absent due to sickness but whether settings will continue to be paid for children who do not attend is presently not clear. If children are absent due to closed settings because of staff recovering from Covid, then the places will still be paid. We are still working through the logistics.

There is partial funding from the Central Government to cover the cost of paid positions for testing for Secondary schools but it is not yet clear what period is covered. There is no funding at present for Primaries or Early Years but tests are being provided for the pilot. It is not a requirement for schools to test the staff and students on site. If all our children are not in, funding will not be received. If it is decided to not fully open schools, children who are not invited in will not get funding.

#### **Relevant Announcements & Reports**

- Share your governing board's experience: Private Finance Initiative (PFI): NGA has been contacted by a governing board who are keen to network with other boards and governors with experience of managing Private Finance Initiative (PFI) debt. If you would be interested in sharing your experiences, please email <a href="michael.barton@nga.org.uk">michael.barton@nga.org.uk</a>.
- DfE extends period product scheme for another year: All learners at schools and post-16 education organisations in England will continue to have access to free period products in their place of study if they need them.

#### **Governor Training - hosted virtually**

- How do Governing Boards Make the Right Strategic Financial Choices for their School? 11 March 2021, 9 to 11.am
- Support for governors and schools to address these and other matters is available from Hackney Education: School improvement, Governance and other skilled experts.

#### Winter 2021: Top Tips for Governing Boards

To support the effective, ethical and accountable governance of your school we share these top tips. They reflect common issues that can place your school at risk of significant challenges about non-compliance by parents, Ofsted and other key stakeholders.

- Publish on your school's website key documents agreed by your board that show how your school is being governed during 2020/21:
  - Full Governing Board and committee membership names, and terms of office of each member
  - Names of governors with key roles (e.g. Chair; Vice-Chair, SEND / Safeguarding link governor)
  - Annual declaration of Business and Pecuniary interests of every member
  - Attendance record of every board member during 2019/20
  - Committee terms of reference to clarify how the board delegates key matters to smaller groups of governors
  - Statutory policies reflect all updates in accordance with regulations (e.g. Safeguarding; Complaints; Behaviour; Sex and Education)
  - Financial Transparency: From 1st January 2021, Maintained schools must publish the number of school employees where gross annual salary equal to or exceeds £100,000. This requirement started 1 September 2020 for Academies
- Understand how your school engages with all parents and other key stakeholders ensuring the spirit of listening, being heard and swiftly resolving issue is central to this
- Ensure all formal discussions and minutes reflect due diligence and challenge for robust key decision making, supported by advance circulation of papers; (eg: finance, quality of education; safety and wellbeing of pupils & staff)
- Ensure diversity in your succession planning and recruitment all governors positions: Chair and Vice-Chair elections, and new governor nominations, elections and appointments
- Headteacher's performance management in maintained schools needs to be done by the 31st December (or date stated in school policy), and include appointing a suitably qualified external adviser chosen by the board to support the process. DfE guidance stipulates that schools should 'use their

discretion' and take 'pragmatic steps', to adapt performance management arrangements and seek alternative evidence where possible to evaluate the objective in light of current circumstances. Reference: Effectively Managing Headteacher Performance Review (January 2014).

**Support for governors and schools** to address these and other matters is available from Hackney Education: School improvement, Governance and other skilled experts.











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

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### Working for every child



