

# Chair of Governors Update

## 23 November 2023

Dear Colleagues,

I open this update, by paying tribute to Ruth Perry and her family.

Ruth's tragic story continues to deeply resonate across our education system. It has also placed a sharper focus on the debate about the inspection of schools and mental wellbeing of our school leaders. Whilst we await an opportunity for transformational change, informed by findings from Ruth's inquest and inquiry by the Education Committee, for today we also keep in mind all our school leaders. In facing the daily challenges of their role, our leaders depend more than ever on the vital support and challenge of their chair and members of the board. They rely on the professionalism and compassion of governors, to help them remain focused on how they can best meet our children's needs.

In this update, which includes the [video](#), [slides](#) and headlines from last week's virtual forum, we touch on the big issues currently facing our education system. We are widening the brief in our forums - in this session we included an item on the complex systemic housing crisis with long wait times for social housing in Hackney. We also heard from Chris Howard, Chair of New Wave Federation reflecting on the responsibility of a chair and the key aspects of how a team works together to drive improvements. Furthermore, we were reminded about the [Short video by Jim Gamble summarising The Child Q Update Report - Why was it me?](#)

As we continue to witness and live through exceptionally challenging times, both locally and internationally, seeking solutions through togetherness becomes all the more important. Desmond Tutu echoes this beautifully with his words... "My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together."

Wishing you all peace, joy and love during advent, the festive season and Hanukkah!

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 23rd November. The event focused on the following key area:

- Responding to the Housing Crisis
- SEND Delivering Better Value (DBV)
- Ofsted/ Performance update
- Inclusion Charter
- Sharing Headlines/ best practice from our chairs and leader
- (The [slide deck](#) and [video](#) from last week's event)

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

- Thursday 1 February 2024
- 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

Director of Education of and Inclusion - Paul Senior

### Headline Notes:

- There have been calls for Hackney students to join a 'nationwide school strike for Palestine'. While the council respects the right to protest, we believe the best place for children to be is in schools learning, and absences are to be marked as unauthorised. Letter from Paul Senior can be found [here](#).
- Mayor Caroline Woodley was appointed in November by popular vote.
- Dawn Carter-McDonald is remaining Interim Chief Executive of Hackney Council until July 2024 and a permanent role can be appointed.
- Group Director of Children & Education has been on leave and is due back in January 2024.
- At the London Director's meeting, there have been some reports of secondary school closures due to falling rolls. This has been seen in Lambeth. Estates strategy will be at the forefront of Hackney Education for the next few years
- To support schools in implementing recommendations from the [Tackling Food Poverty in Education report](#), Hackney Council is offering targeted funding. The £20,000 grant aims to assist schools in progressing these recommendations to tackle food poverty and promote healthy meals. Submission Deadline: **Thursday, 14th December 2023, 12.00 noon**. Full guidance can be found [here](#).
- Exclusions in the secondary phase are largely due to unmet needs.
- All schools, Children Centres and education buildings need effective school property maintenance and compliance arrangements in place in order to manage the premises. [This document](#) sets out key responsibilities that you have as Responsible Persons for your premises and provides links to further relevant advice.

(Video section **1:20 - 12:00**)

## **RESPONDING TO THE HOUSING CRISIS**

**Assistant Director of Benefits and Housing Needs - Jennifer Wynter**

**Head of High Needs - Zoe Tyndall**

**Housing Register - Marcia Facey**

**Senior Medical Advisor - Adam Ahmed**

### **Headline Notes:**

- There is a deep and complex systemic housing crisis with long wait times for social housing in the borough.
- The biggest change needed is cross government systems remodelling and complete policy change to solve the crisis.
- Competing messages are currently being given in the system, which is re-traumatising already traumatised people.
- Hackney has had the steepest house price increase in the UK. It is also the second most deprived borough in England.
- There are very few properties available, and with 8,400 households on the waiting list awaiting social housing, demand outstrips supply with waiting times anywhere from 3 to 39 years.
- 3063 households in Hackney are living in Temporary Accommodation (TA), and around 3700 Hackney children live in TA. There is a shortage of temporary accommodation in London, and households are being placed outside of London, even as far as Coventry and Walsall.
- Supporting letters from GPs, social workers, headteachers, unfortunately do not have much bearing on the allocation times for social housing.
- There may be other channels such as residents looking to swap housing, which means families may get rehomed quicker.

See [slides 7 - 35](#) (Video section **12:35 - 38:09**)

## **SEND DELIVERING BETTER VALUE (DBV)**

**Interim Assistant Director of SEND - Joe Wilson**

### **Headline Notes:**

- The Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme was created by the DfE due to poor outcomes and low confidence in settings and schools. 3 programmes were created to support intervention and provide best value and meet the need in the system
  - The Safety Valve Intervention Programme
  - The Delivering Better Value in SEND Programme
  - Education and Skills Funding Agency Programme
- Hackney Education is working in collaboration with Newton Europe.
- We are currently in phase 2 with a £1m grant over 2 years to rebalance the SEND system and cover a whole range of needs.
- Hackney has developed 3 data based workstreams:
  - Increasing capacity - graduated response, with new staff and resources, team in EY given support and guidance as early as possible - quicker response
  - Strengthen commissioning of independent and non-maintained schools. Good value for money and ensuring children are well supported
  - Working with minority communities across the local area, improving capacity and capability to support children's needs.

See [slides 36 - 39](#) (Video section **38:17 - 47:11**)

**OFSTED / PERFORMANCE UPDATE : SHARING HEADLINE AND QUESTIONS THAT INSPECTORS ASK OF GOVERNORS**  
Assistant Director of School Performance & Improvement

**Headline Notes:**

- Hackney has seen 11 Ofsted inspections since the start of the academic year - which is roughly one a week. The timings were anticipated, as this is within the normal cycle of Ofsted. The pandemic disrupted inspections, and Ofsted are aiming to inspect all settings by 2025. They appear to be on track to achieve this.
- By and large all inspections went well and 97.5% of Hackney schools are judged to be good or better. The number of schools that are less than good has reduced to 2.
- Shared learning has been very useful, we have a strong system and are getting good outcomes. We have well-led and well managed schools all across Hackney.
- The day before an inspection, the Lead Inspector contacts the Headteacher in the morning and arranges a 90 minute phone call that day ahead of inspection.
- Governors advised to stay in touch with schools during this period
- The pupil premium and sport premium are often asked about
- Inspector will want to see minutes from meetings between the headteacher and governors, and will want to see evidence of robust and constructive challenge from governors
- Governor visits should be written up with key themes, attendance and it would be good to ensure that the governors' strengths are being appropriately applied. Ensure that all governors visit the school at least once a school year or more.
- Ensure that safeguarding training and policies are up to date and that policies are being applied in practice
- Sir Martyn Oliver confirmed as the next Ofsted chief inspector so the future of Ofsted inspections may change
- Questions that Ofsted ask governors are included in slides [45 to 49](#)

See [slides 40 - 49](#) (Video section **47.11 - 1:02:55**)

**INCLUSION CHARTER: HELPING TO DEFINE PRACTICE ACROSS OUR SCHOOLS**  
System Lead for Diversity and Inclusion - Debra Robinson

**Headline Notes:**

- Hackney Education are in the final stages of our charter "The Hackney School's Charter for Race and SEND"
- At heart of charter is focus on equalities duty, while also shining a light on current practice.
- As an off-shoot of this, schools are working on their own local charters. This will capture the promising practice that we can see across schools, and help children who have felt like they have had barriers in schools.
- Data from our schools and outcomes are fantastic but we recognise that it does not look the same for everybody. Commitment to making that parity across all groups.
- On the 28th November there is a soft launch event and presentation at Hackney Town Hall for Hackney Schools Charter for Race and SEND
- We are working in a collaborative fashion with schools, who are doing marvellous work, but there is still work to be done
- Please encourage keeping EDI on your agendas and bring the charter into meetings, this will help to see issues through these lenses.
- Electronic version of the charter will be available
- We endeavour to highlight and shine promise and practice on schools
- We are supporting anti-racist training and the charter will show that

- Jim Gamble said children recognise when schools are schools being fair and consistent and they also recognise when they are not.
- We collectively need to ensure that there is equity and parity in systems and structure that we are trying to create and the structures that we are trying to dismantle

See [slides](#) 50 - 53 (Video section **1:02:57 - 1:14:50**)

## SHARING HEADLINES/ BEST PRACTICE FROM OUR CHAIRS AND LEADERS

### Chair of Governor for New Wave Federation - Christopher Howard

#### **Headline Notes:**

- Responsibility of the chair vastly increased when Thomas Fairchild school was brought in as the 4th school to join the New Wave Federation
- The key to success is communication
- Successful integration meant embracing all facets of partnership
- Being a federation meant that capital and resources were shared, but the risk was also increased. This involved managing stakeholders expectations, for example, parents and staff had many concerns around resources. E.g. reallocation of teachers and possibly stopping activities such as swimming lessons. However, it brought us more opportunities and helped us to understand stakeholders expectations, which then helped us to build a picture of things to consider around finances etc.
- We appreciated the value that the clerk and bursar provided and when it came to any strategic changes, leveraging the skills amongst the group has been critical.
- Two boards were set up - the localised governing board with a soft partnership who were closer to what was going on "on the ground". They did not mandate curriculum, resource groups, during the transition period, the board had a more hands on approach.
- A real strong flow of status updates, especially being chair of both boards and conduits between the two. Both were separate entities but clear flow of information between sites
- Leadership held to account and leadership robust, Governors thinking about long term objective
- It would not have been possible without the support of the Local Authority (LA), who provided invaluable help and made the transition as smooth as possible. Collaboration was key, and included SIP visits, and intensive support plans which were never regarded as negative, but rather an opportunity for growth and change.
- Through ownskill reviews, identifying gaps in capabilities and felt stronger and able to value
- Paul Senior formally thanked Christopher Howard and the team at New Wave for the great collaboration between the LA and federation. The outcomes have been fantastic and mature and collaborative conversations were had. Having the right leadership in place has made a big difference.

Video section (**1:15:09 - 1:24:05**)

## HIGHLIGHT OF TRAINING AND GUIDANCE FOR GOVERNORS

### Headline Notes:

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>People</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Governance workload:</b> The heightened intensity of governance pressures threatening its sustainability, straining even the most dedicated volunteers is explored in a <a href="#">new study</a> by NGA.</li> <li>• <b>Governor transparency:</b> check governors filled in the declaration of business interests, ensure governor information is online</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Strategy</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Budgets:</b> Schools funding in England is going up faster than economy-wide inflation, but not as fast as the cost pressures schools actually face. See the November <a href="#">Institute for Fiscal Studies Report</a>.</li> <li>• <b>School Absence:</b> <a href="#">Missing Children, Missing Grades Report</a> (Children's Commissioner) This report finds that school absence has become endemic in Key Stage 4. Over the last couple of years, over a third of all pupils in Key Stage 4 were either persistently or severely absent for at least one year. Poor attendance has a dramatic relationship with GCSE results.</li> </ul> |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Regulatory Changes &amp; Compliance</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Safeguarding: Keeping Children Safe in Education - awareness</b><br/><b>Section 128 (s.128) mandatory check in Schools:</b> must be done for all Senior management roles, including governors/ trustees, and recorded on the school single central register.</li> <li>• <b>Beyond Ofsted Inquiry -</b> New school inspection inquiry report <a href="#">here</a></li> </ul>   |
| <b>Crisis Management &amp; Resilience</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mental Health:</b> Teacher wellbeing is at its lowest level in five years, according to <a href="#">research</a> published this week by Education Support. New <a href="#">online resource hub</a> was launched this week on the Mentally Healthy Schools site.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Stakeholder Engagement &amp; Communication</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NGA's <a href="#">Parental Engagement Guidance</a>.</li> <li>• Coming soon: The Hackney Complaints Procedure Model</li> <li>• <b>Hackney Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Notifications Guidance -</b> Local guidance (September 2023).</li> <li>• <a href="#">(Re)moving exclusions: School exclusion reduction in Glasgow and London:</a> Luke Billingham (Hackney based youth and community worker, and friend of The Difference) and Dr Fern Gillon (University of Glasgow) have published an open access paper comparing exclusion reduction work in Glasgow and London. Their in-depth study concludes that policy conditions around school exclusion differ significantly in the two cities, identifying some significant barriers to exclusion reduction in London.</li> </ul> |

### Autumn Term training:

- Wed 6 December 2023, 5.00 - 7.00pm: [How do we safeguard our children including those Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic communities?](#)
- Thursday 7 December 5.00 - 7.00pm: [How does the chair of governors shape strong governance and what is distinct about this role?](#)
- 

### Spring & Summer Term training highlights:

- Thu, 18th January, 9.00 - 11.00am **or** Wed, 15th June, 5.00 - 7.00pm: [How do schools ensure effective engagement with stakeholders and effectively manage complaints?](#)
- Tue, 30th January, 9.00 – 11.00am **or** Thu, 25th April 2024, 5.00 - 7.00pm: [How do governors fulfil their professional and ethical responsibility?](#)
- Thu, 7th March, 5.00 - 7.00pm **or** Tue, 21st May, 9.00 - 11.00am: [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, 19th March, 5.00 - 7.00pm & Wed, 12th June, 5.00 - 7.00pm: [How do Governors and Leaders implement the Equalities Duties?](#)

### Relevant Links

#### Headline Notes:

- [Beyond Ofsted Inquiry \(2023\)](#)
- [Sir Martyn Oliver confirmed as the next Ofsted chief inspector](#)
- [Get school-to-school support from system leaders](#)
- [Ethnic and Racial Disparities among pupils in English Schools 2023](#)
- [Children's Doctors, School Leaders And Social Workers Urge Chancellor Not To Cut Benefits](#)
- [Briefing on school attendance in England](#)
- [House of Barnabas - Homelessness](#)
- [Speaking Up - Accents and Social Mobility Report](#)
- [The Essential Art of 'Meet and Greet' in an Education Setting](#)
- [Governing a Multi Academy Trust: a handbook for trustees](#)
- [Speech by Leora Cruddas CBE to CST Annual Conference 2023](#)
- [The influence of headteachers on their schools](#)
- [Everyone on Board: tackling the democratic deficit on school governing boards](#)
- [How an 'equity lens' can transform school leadership](#)
- [Appetite amongst teachers for flexible working approaches, but limited research into their impact](#)
- [Transforming School Food In Hackney](#)
- [Hackney Council Poverty Reduction and Cost of Living Newsletter](#)
- [Ofsted clarifies its position on attendance](#)
- [Ofsted: Improving school attendance](#)
- [Ofsted Webinar: An update on attendance with Ofsted and the DfE](#)