

Chair of Governors Update

7 February 2025

Dear Colleagues,

Jason Morantz opened our forum last week, by sharing an update on the development of the Hackney Education Vision and Strategic Priorities. We then focused on our priority to ensure **Strong and Sustainable School Systems**. In recent years, all schools nationally have been encountering unprecedented cost pressures. In London schools, these challenges have been further compounded by the shifting demographic and falling pupil rolls. The impact of the National Funding Formula, introduced in 2018 to reduce the inequalities of school funding across the nation has also resulted in less resources for our inner city schools.

Today, our leaders supported by governors are continuing the mission to ensure our schools are inclusive, delivering high standards for all. However, we also need to ensure our education system remains financially sustainable. Acknowledging that we cannot solve today's problems with yesterday's solutions, we initiated a discussion during the forum to consider these threats alongside the exploring opportunities.

We hope as you watch back and reflect on the presentations in the links for the [video 1](#) and [video 2](#), and link to the [slide deck](#), and the summary notes below, it will inspire further thinking around the opportunities that will help us solve these issues.

We recognise the vital role that our governors and school leaders play as agents of change. After half term we will share more details about working collectively with our schools, aligning risk management and financial sustainability. We will also engage our governors and leaders in collectively rethinking how we engineer a sustainable education system - one that will enable us to further invest in addressing inequities and continuing to provide an excellent education for all Hackney Children.

We hope you enjoy this edition of our Chairs Update and wish you all a lovely February half term break!

Sincerely,

Maggie Kalnins, Leader of Governance Services

The Content:

This update provides a summary of headlines from our forum for Chairs of Governors - which took place virtually from 5pm to 6.30pm on Thursday 30th January. The event focused on the following key areas:

- Hackney Education Draft Vision
- Governor Led Discussion on Strong and Sustainable School Systems
- Headlines from the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill
- Ofsted Updates
- Headteacher Peer Coaching Model
- (The [slide deck](#) and [video 1](#) + [video 2](#) from last week's event)

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

- Thursday 13th March 2025 (Virtual)
- Thursday 22nd May 2025 - **Governors Annual Conference- 4pm to 7pm**
- Thursday 26th June 2-25 (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.

Hackney Education Vision Statement (UPDATED January 2024)

*Our aim is to improve the life chances and well being of every child and young person in Hackney across all communities. We will develop an education offer which is **ambitious, anti-racist, inclusive and encourages individuality whilst fostering a sense of belonging and well-being.***

*We will achieve this by working **collaboratively and in partnership across the entire family of schools and settings**, including academies, early years, and independent providers, to **sustain and evolve** a high quality education offer that ensures success, excellence, equity and inclusivity for all.*

Draft Priorities - have been updated following comments from stakeholders, including our school governors who attended the forum last November. For a breakdown of how comments from school governors have been incorporated into the latest draft, please see [slides](#) 7-8.

- **Priority 1: Inclusion** To ensure our SEND provision fully meets the continuum of children and young peoples' needs in a way which is increasingly sustainable. We will support our schools and settings responsively and strategically to identify children's needs early and work with them to meet the increasing level of need.
- **Priority 2: Alternative Provision** To develop the Alternative Provision offer to ensure that all pupils have the appropriate setting to ensure their needs are met. Tiered support will ensure pupils receive the correct support in the appropriate setting thereby reducing exclusions in the secondary phase and disproportionality.
- **Priority 3: School Estates** To develop a sustainable, area-based estates planning model that ensures every school sees itself as part of a borough wide approach, working together to ensure a 3 -19 flexible school organisation system, that can maintain ambition for our children and respond to population changes. This will be an inclusive system that prioritises the need to support disadvantaged communities.
- **Priority 4: Strength and Sustainability** To ensure that our family of schools are strong, sustainable and financially viable with appropriate supports and accountabilities in place. A spectrum of partnership working will be encouraged to achieve this. A recruitment and retention strategy will be developed to ensure that the best members of staff are employed to teach our children and young people.
- **Priority 5: School Led System** To ensure that the borough's strong education offer and high outcomes are sustained. Hackney's successful landscape of settings, including schools, academies, early years, and independent providers, is well placed to support each other through effective brokering and commissioning, led from the centre.
- **Priority 6: Closing the Achievement Gap** To work with schools and settings to enable the best possible achievement for every child; closing gaps in achievement with a focus on pupils facing economic hardship/living in poverty, and children from groups across the whole community that are underperforming. Ensure parents and careers are effectively and appropriately engaged with their pupils' learning and development.

Hackney Education Vision Next Steps

- Spring 2025: Revised version to be shared with internal and external stakeholders for workshoping and discussion with leads assigned to each area.
- Summer 2025: Consultation
- Autumn 2025: Revised strategy shared and published

See [slides](#) 3 - 9 ([Video](#) - link takes you to correct section)

DEEPER FOCUS ON PRIORITY 4: STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE SCHOOL SYSTEMS

Maggie Kalnins - Leader of Governance Services
Terry Bryan - Assistant Director, School Estates Strategy
Suhail Kadir - Schools Finance Manager

Strong and Sustainable School Systems

The education system in Hackney is facing significant challenges and Hackney Education wants to encourage a system-wide, collective approach, rather than simply addressing issues on a school-by-school basis.

National challenges such as the cost of living crisis and post-pandemic financial pressures are compounded by London-specific issues, including demographic shifts, falling school pupil rolls, and a funding redistribution that has left London schools with fewer resources. Since 2017, Hackney's **primary school population** has dropped by around 24% surplus places (4866 pupils), with projections indicating a further decline of up to 36% surplus places (7508) over the next decade. This decline is mirrored in secondary schools, where falling primary numbers are now impacting **secondary school population**, projected at 24% surplus places (3105 pupils) over the next 10 years. These trends pose major financial viability concerns, and have forced difficult decisions around school mergers and closures in Hackney.

Across Hackney, schools have seen their reserves diminish. The decrease in pupil numbers directly affects school funding, creating an unsustainable financial model where schools are increasingly reliant on reserves to stay afloat. Without intervention, this financial trajectory is set to worsen. There is an urgent need for strategic, collective action rather than isolated, school-level responses. School leaders, governors, and local authorities are encouraged to work together to develop sustainable solutions that go beyond temporary financial fixes, ensuring long-term stability for the borough's education system.

Breakout Discussion on Strong and Sustainable School Systems - SWOT Analysis

A brief summary of the our system's strengths and the opportunities we might further explore include:

Strengths

- Strong Educational Foundation: Hackney schools are in a strong position, with high ratings (Outstanding and Good), consistently above national averages.
- Diversity and Staff Stability: Hackney's schools benefit from diverse staff and pupils, strong staff retention, and effective communication with governors.

Opportunities

- Maximizing Collaboration & Resource Sharing: Schools working together beyond MATs, sharing staff, expertise, and leadership, and strengthening links from primary to secondary.
- Addressing SEND & School Place Challenges: Expanding SEND and AP provision, utilizing unused school sites, and ensuring fair school placements to improve parental satisfaction.
- Financial Sustainability & Community Engagement: Generating income through co-working spaces, involving the private sector for efficiencies, and repurposing vacant sites for social housing.

Call to Action for Schools and the Local Authority:

At School Level:

- Assess budget risks and ensure financial sustainability by: forecasting finances; investing in education technology; ensuring value for money; strengthening governance, staff expertise, and organisational resilience.
- Develop a long term and sustainable strategy by: reviewing financial sustainability, integrating curriculum and financial planning, conducting strategic assessments, exploring diversification and partnerships, and ensuring continuous improvement to meet community needs.

At Local Authority Level:

- Recognise the key role of governors and school leaders as agents of change
- Provide / broker support and guidance for schools to support this work
- Monitor and challenge organisations where financial sustainability is at risk

See [slides](#) 10 - 17 ([Video](#) - link takes you to correct section)

NATIONAL AND LOCAL HEADLINES

Patrick Alexander - Assistant Director for School Performance & Improvement

Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill: Headlines on Proposed Policy Changes and Implications

- Academies will be legally required to follow the national curriculum; new teachers must have/ be working towards qualified teacher status, and have a statutory induction. They will also have to follow the national teacher pay and conditions framework, if not in place.
- If this Bill goes through, academy orders for 'inadequate' maintained schools will become 'discretionary'. There will be new duties for schools and councils to co-operate on admissions and the presumption that all new schools must be academies will be ended.
- All Local Authorities must have 'children not in school' registers, with a duty to support parents on their registers. School attendance orders will be standardised nationally, with councils compelled to check whether the home learning environment for a child is suitable .
- Ofsted to gain powers to enter suspected illegal schools and "search" rather than just inspect.
- All state-funded schools to ensure all children on roll in reception to year 6 have access to a free, at least 30-minute-long breakfast club. Also a limit of three branded items of school uniform required by primary schools, and four items at secondary (if a tie is branded).
- Safeguarding partners such as councils, police and health to secure participation of education settings as relevant agencies in multi-safeguarding arrangements.
- Duty for safeguarding partners to set up multi-agency child protection teams. Will include a person "with education experience".
- A single unique identifier to be introduced for each child across multiple data sets, with a new duty to share information for welfare and safeguarding purposes. DfE to run regional pilot to test feasibility of using the unique NHS number as the consistent identifier.
- The strategic role of virtual school heads to promote educational achievement of children with a social worker and in kinship care to be made statutory.

Ofsted consultation and opportunity to share your thoughts:

- [Ofsted's proposals for a fairer education inspection system and the proposed report cards.](#)
- [Proposals for improvements to Ofsted inspections](#)

Hackney: Area SEND Inspection

- Hackney Education is preparing for an imminent area SEND inspection. Further updates on the process will be shared when this commences.

See [slides](#) 19- 23 ([Video](#) - link takes you to correct section)

SPOTLIGHT ON EQUITY - AMBITIOUS AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR EVERY CHILD

Patrick Alexander - Assistant Director for School Performance & Improvement

Hackney's Validated Outcomes

Below are some key headlines for Hackney's 2024 validated outcomes. A huge thank you to school governors for your work in ensuring these fantastic outcomes for Hackney's pupils. A full breakdown of the Hackney's Validated Outcomes can be found in the slide deck here, [slides](#) 25-27

Secondary 2024 Headline Indicators

- Hackney schools are in the [top quintile](#) for the following indicators for secondary pupils: attainment 8; English & Maths 4+; English & Maths 5+; Progress 8; Progress 8 - English; Progress 8 - Maths; EBacc APS
- In Progress 8, Hackney is [9th out of 152](#) local authorities.

Key Stage 4 2024 - Disadvantaged Pupils

- Hackney schools are in the [top ten](#) of all local authorities for the following indicators for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds in Key Stage 4: Attainment 8; English & Maths 4+; English & Maths 5+; Progress 8; EBacc APS
- For Progress 8, Hackney is [2nd out of 152](#) local authorities.

KS4 2024 - EHCP Pupils

- Hackney schools are in the top ten of all local authorities for the following indicators for pupils in Key Stage for with an EHCP: Attainment 8; English & Maths 4+; English and Maths 5+; Progress 8

Closing Attainment Gap

- A useful report on governing boards' role in tackling educational disadvantage, published by the National Governance Association, entitled 'Widening the lens on disadvantage' can be found [here](#).

See [slides](#) 24 - 27 ([Video](#) - link takes you to correct section)

HEADTEACHER PEER COACHING MODEL
Rachel Thompson - Leadership and Management Advisor
Jim O'Shea - Headteacher at Rushmore Primary

Headteacher Peer Coaching Model:

- The Primary Headteacher Peer Coaching Program was created in response to headteachers' concerns about well-being and support during challenging times in schools. Over a year, headteachers have received training through a partnership with the Alivi coaching organization, working in triads to practice coaching skills.
- The program includes 12 trained coaches and aims to expand further, offering coaching to new headteachers and those in supported schools. The coaching model focuses on providing individualized support, helping headteachers explore specific challenges, boost confidence, and improve problem-solving skills.
- Coaching provides a structured, confidential space for heads to discuss issues, supporting personal development and fostering collaboration between headteachers. The impact of coaching includes improved listening skills, increased understanding of common challenges, and greater confidence in managing multi-layered problems. The program is free, offers six hours of coaching annually, and aims to promote a coaching culture in schools, with plans to expand and include deputy heads in the future.

Further information on the headteacher peer coaching model can be found [here](#).

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See [slides](#) 7 - 10 ([Video](#) - link takes you to correct section)

HIGHLIGHT OF TRAINING & GUIDANCE FOR GOVERNORS - HEADLINES

- **Tuesday 4 Mar, 5.00 - 7.00pm** [How do we safeguard our children including those from Black and Global Majority communities?](#)
- **Wednesday, 5 March 9am-11am** [How does the chair of governors shape strong governance and what is distinct about this role?](#)
- **Wednesday, 12 March 9am-11am** [How do governors fulfil their professional and ethical responsibility?](#)
- **Thursday 22nd May 2025 - Governors Annual Conference- 4pm to 7pm (in-person location tbc)**
- [NGA Webinars](#)

RELEVANT LINKS

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

- [The Equality Act 2010 and Disabled Pupils: A Guide for Governors and Trustees](#)
- [NGA - Widening the Lens on Disadvantage](#)
- [Education Policy Institute: Local Disadvantage Gaps in England](#)
- [Huntington Research: The Power of Belonging: How It Shapes Our Behaviour and How You Can Build and Support This in Your School](#)
- [City AM: The Class Divide: Why Social Mobility Is the Missing Piece in DEI](#)
- [University of Exeter: The Equity Scorecard](#)
- [Sutton Trust: Educational Access and Social Mobility](#)
- [Heart of the community: A study of The Reach Foundation's Cradle-to-Career Partnership](#)
- [TES: Schools Can't Tackle Poverty on Their Own](#)

2. Enabling achievement

- [Sutton Trust: Pupil Premium Strategies](#)
- [Sutton Trust: Priorities for the Curriculum and Assessment Review](#)
- [NGA Ofsted Guide](#)
- [SchoolsWeek: Ofsted to Trial New Inspection Approach](#)
- [Forbes: Nord Anglia Helps Students Reflect on Their Thinking for an AI World](#)
- [NGA: Sheffield Governors' Engagement Project](#)

3. Assuring provision for Pupils with SEND

- [SEN and Disability Duties: Guidance for School Governing Boards](#)
- [Gov.Uk: New Visits to understand how Children with SEND who are not in school are supported](#)

4. Sustainable school systems

- [Browne Jacobson: School Leaders Survey](#)
- [SchoolsWeek: How Ministers Can Transition Schools From Competition to Collaboration](#)
- [IFS: Schools and Colleges Facing Another Round of Belt-Tightening Years – Spending Review](#)
- [Public Accounts Committee Report on Education Spending](#)
- [Phillipson's AI Revolution: What Schools Need to Know](#)
- [Most Schools Face Making Cuts Next Year](#)
- [Pearson: The Case for Investment in Digital Transformation in Schools](#)

5. Safeguarding, wellbeing and pastoral provision

- [Gov.Uk: Preparation for Adulthood: Arrangements in Local Areas – A Thematic Review](#)
- [Children Commissioner: Deaths of Children in Need](#)
- [Children Commissioner: Children Involvement in 2024 Riots](#)