

Governors' Update

November 2020

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Current Arrangements

The School Governor Service (SGS) team are continuing to work from home so please be aware that, when you ring in, there may be a delay in getting your call to a specific individual. The telephone number and email address above are still in use but calls are rerouted to different team members in turn. Governors will be informed as soon as there are any changes to these arrangements.

Training is continuing as a live online offer with the training programme and bespoke training courses for schools and groups of schools. All the other service packages are continuing and they can all be ordered via the Skills4Bradford website. All governors are able to visit the website to reserve training courses and look at the other offers, including those from other BMDC teams.

Governor Meetings in the Autumn Term

A reminder that Governing Board meetings should continue to be held virtually at the moment to reduce the risk of cross-contamination. Governors need to consider that meetings are attended by senior leaders and that, if anyone did test positive or any infection was passed on, this might impact upon the day to day management of the school as well as on the families of governors and their work colleagues.

Training and Networking

A reminder of upcoming topics from the online Training Programme:-

Network Meetings:

The School Governor Service (SGS) is aware that governors with specific responsibilities find that it is very helpful to liaise with other governors with similar responsibilities and that this is currently very difficult and so these online networks have been planned to enable governors to meet virtually. They will each be facilitated by one of the SGS officers who will circulate topics and information prior to the session. Governors will be able to request topics for discussion. Sessions have been planned for two terms initially at a cost of £50 for both sessions.

Chairs' Network - Tuesday 10 November 2020 and Tuesday 9 March 2021 (both 6.00pm – 7.30pm (Virtual))

Safeguarding & Vulnerable Groups Governors' Network - Tuesday 17 November 2020 & Tuesday 2 March 2021 both 6.00pm – 7.30pm (virtual)

Wellbeing & Mental Health Governors' Network - Wednesday 9 December 2020 and Wednesday 24 February 2021 (both 5.00pm-6.30pm)

SEND: The Role of Governors - Friday 6 November, 10.00am – 12.00 noon

All governors need to have an understanding of SEND to ensure that they can effectively monitor the progress and achievement of SEND children in their school and the impact of spending. This course aims to give governors the information that they need to undertake these tasks. It will also explore the role of SEND Named Governor.

**Introduction to Governance (Session 1) - Monday 9 November, 10.00am – 12.30pm
(Session 2, 23 November 10.00am – 12.30pm)**

This School Governor Service course is targeted at new and recently appointed or elected governors and trustees. It is a 'safe' environment to ask questions, learn about the role of governance in achieving successful outcomes for children.

This course aims to give you, as a newly appointed governor/trustee (including headteachers, staff governors and associate members), a level of knowledge of governance that you need to effectively support your school in raising standards

It also offers governors and trustees the opportunity for self-assessment and to learn from and share experiences

Curriculum: Monitoring Recovery and Planning - Friday 13 November, 10.00am – 12.00 noon

Currently one area of real concern is ensuring that the curriculum being provided allows pupils to catch up on the topics and skills that they have missed and continue to progress, prior to the resumption of the normal curriculum at Easter. Ofsted expects governors to have knowledge of the curriculum that is being taught in their schools, the reasons why it has been chosen and how it meets the specific needs of the children attending the school and so reduce inequality.

This course will look at the overall curriculum requirements and ways in which governors can both plan for the future and assess the suitability and quality of the recovery curriculum that is being delivered.

Parent Governor - Know Your Role - Friday 20 November, 10.00am – 12.00 noon

This course aims to give Parent Governors confidence and clarity about their role in Governance. It will give the opportunity to learn about and discuss roles and responsibility and look at suitable behaviours and conduct. It will explain jargon and the structure of governance and the role Parent governors play. The course will reflect on common misconceptions of the role and address the challenges specifically faced by Parent Governors. This course is suitable for parent governors that have been in role for a number of years and for new parent governors that have completed the Introduction to Governance course.

Chairing the Board (Session 1) - Tuesday 24 November, 6.00pm – 8.30pm (Session 2, Tuesday 1 December, 6.00pm – 8.30pm)

An effective Chair is responsible for leading the work of the Governing Board including maintaining a focus on the strategic direction of the school. Practical tools will be shared to support the role and the course will include the role of the chair in leading the governing body in meetings and building an effective team; developing the governing board and effective practice in order to drive school improvement over the year; working effectively with the Head Teacher and executive leaders; developing a shared vision and strategic decision making; **and** succession planning.

The course will give governors the opportunity for self-reflection and personal action planning.

Academy Governance - Thursday 26 November, 6.00pm – 8.00pm

This session will explore what academy governance is about, the legal responsibilities of a Trust, the layers of delegation and the additional duties resulting from charitable status.

It will include recommendations from the National Governance Association on the most effective systems and the different roles and responsibilities of the various layers of governance in multi academy trusts (MATs).

Pupil Premium, Sports Premium and Other Additional Funds/Grants - Monday 30 November, 6.00pm – 8.00pm

Governors are specifically tasked with ensuring that Pupil Premium is used to support the disadvantaged children attending their school, so that those children can progress and achieve to the best of their ability. The ways in which this is done will vary according to the needs of the pupils at the school and should be based on evidence of effectiveness. Governors at Primary Schools are also expected to monitor the use and impact of the Sports Premium. The criteria for its use are different but the same monitoring approach is needed and the course will look at ways in which evidence of effective use can be judged.

In addition, there are now additional funds allocated to schools to assist with the catch up work that schools are putting into place over the next year, much of this is also for work with disadvantaged pupils. The course will look at the areas where this funding will be used and look at the systems that can be used to monitor its impact.

Free Course Cyber Awareness and Safety Training - Monday 7 December, 6.00pm - 8.00pm

The West Yorkshire Police have agreed to deliver online training for governors on Cyber Awareness and Safety as it relates to schools. Governors will be aware of the increasing levels of concern for the online safety of children and young people and the need to ensure that they understand the dangers. Governors will be able to receive the latest information available on this topic so that they can effectively monitor provision from the curriculum and safeguarding aspects.

Maintaining Good Governance in COVID-19 Times - Tuesday 8 December 2020, 10.00am - 12 noon

The session will include:

- Governing in challenging circumstances, business continuity and using virtual meetings effectively
- Planning for the future, including the core responsibilities, to ensure that longer term and current strategies are effectively planned and monitored to promote recovery and longer term improvement.

Please visit Skills4Bradford to reserve a place on any SGS courses or network meetings.

www.skills4bradford.co.uk or email school.governor@bradford.gov.uk

Updates from the Department for Education**Remote Education**

As Governors will be aware the DfE sent out a Temporary Continuation Direction (in effect from 22 October 2020) with a duty on schools to provide education to children at home and guidance for schools to have contingency plans for remote learning. More information is available [here](#) which explains that schools are expected to 'consider how to continue to improve the quality of their existing curriculum offer, for example through technology, and have a strong contingency plan in place for remote education provision. This planning will be particularly important to support a scenario in which the logistical challenges of remote provision are greatest, for example where large numbers of pupils are required to remain at home.'

There are expectations around the need to deliver a broad and ambitious curriculum and to 'plan a programme that is of equivalent length to the core teaching pupils would receive in school, ideally including daily contact with teachers.'

The government has confirmed that an additional 100,000 laptops will be made available for those children most in need.

Governors will wish to ensure that plans are in place meet the expectations the government has set and allow children who are absent from school to continue to access the learning that they need.

Governance Handbook

An update to the Governance Handbook has been issued in October.

The new version, available [here](#) has a section explaining the changes since the last edition.

This includes a link to the DfE Covid-19 information page and also to the [School Governance Update Page](#)

The handbook has been updated to include the stronger emphasis on the Board's role in Safeguarding and the importance of Risk Assessments.

There are a number of changes in the accountability section which governors will wish to look at in detail and guidance on the arrangement of visits to schools during the Covid-19 outbreak.

One area to highlight is that of parental engagement with the need for governors to ensure their school:

- Regularly communicates with parents and carers
- Uses parental engagement to inform strategic decision-making
- Support parents and carers to understand the structure of the school, how it operates, and how they can support their child's education
- Understands parental engagement isn't achieved by simply having parent governors, or by doing one-off exercises (page 16)

When holding school leaders to account, ask the question "How effectively does the school listen to the views of pupils and parents?".

Students to be Given More Time to Prepare for 2021 Exams

Please follow the link to find out more information on students receiving more time to prepare for 2021 exams.

[Students to be given more time to prepare for 2021 exams](#)

Updates from Ofsted

Ofsted has now released a report, available [here](#), giving details of their findings from visits to schools carried out in September.

Some concerns noted were that:

'Over a third of the schools we visited for this report had noted more parents opting to home educate their children. Some parents will have made a positive choice, after enjoying their summer experience at home, but many leaders believed parents were concerned about the safety of their children. We will watch this trend as our visits continue over the autumn.'

'Schools told us that they had plans to provide remote learning, through technology or printed work, but they said much of the content they could provide remotely was not fully aligned with the classroom curriculum. If we expect many children to find themselves at home in term time once or even more often this year, for possibly a fortnight at a time, they must not lose the progression that a strong, well-sequenced curriculum brings. Without that structure, remote education becomes more about filling time than about effective learning.'

The next report to be published will include more details on the experiences of children with SEND

Updates from the Local Authority

Elective Home Education

Guidance has been published by the DfE for parents, carers and Local Authorities on elective Home Education and this has been shared with Headteachers in the latest weekly update from the LA. It 'strongly recommends' that the LA work with schools, parents and carers and other professionals to co-ordinate a meeting before the parent makes a final decision, 'in order to ensure the parent fully

considers what is in the best interests of each individual child. This is particularly important where vulnerable children, children with a social worker, and those at greatest risk of harm are involved.' 'We expect schools and other professionals to engage with LAs where a parent is considering withdrawing their child from school for EHE before the child's name is removed from the roll. This will enable the LA to coordinate a meeting ahead of the child being withdrawn from school and the parent confirming in writing that they are being electively home educated instead. If a child attends a special school and this was arranged by a local authority, the local authority must give consent for the child's name to be removed from the roll'.

The guidance reminds schools that 'Ofsted will continue to look for any evidence of off-rolling. Off-rolling is never acceptable. We are clear that pressuring a parent to remove their child from the school (including to home educate their child) is a form of off-rolling.'

Governors may wish to ask if any families have elected to home educate their children recently and if plans are in place to comply with this guidance.

National Tutoring Programme

The National Tutoring programme has now announced details of its Tuition Partners. Further information available [here](#). Any state primary or secondary school in England is eligible to receive tutoring through Tuition Partners.

Tutoring is aimed to support disadvantaged pupils, those eligible for pupil premium funding. But it is down to schools to decide which of their pupils would benefit the most from extra support. Schools are now able to request tutoring from approved Tuition Partners from through the website. The latest blog from NTP Tuition Partners director Emily Yeomans (also available using the link) covers what considerations schools need to make when booking tutoring for pupils. Governors will want to ask about the priorities that have been identified by the school and then ask for monitoring information once the tutoring has begun.

Education Endowment Foundation

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has announced three [new research studies](#) designed to provide greater understanding of the strategies schools put in place to support pupils throughout Covid-19 closures, and the impact of these approaches on the disadvantage gap. Previous research carried out by the EEF found that the lockdown period and school closures are likely to have depleted previous efforts to close the gap. These latest studies will estimate the extent of regress before and after closures by analysing a large group of primary schools.

Study on Online Tutoring for Disadvantaged Pupils

A [new study](#) released by the Education Endowment Foundation explores the role of online tutoring as a "powerful tool" in helping disadvantaged pupils during school closures. The research found many positives to online learning with children enjoying the one-on-one support that they receive through tutoring, not fearing judgement from their peers as well having time and space to learning at their own speed.

The EEF delivered the pilot tutoring project in collaboration with Impetus, The Sutton Trust and Nesta, which aimed to explore how online tutoring could support learning whilst schools are closed and successfully delivered more than 7,000 lessons to a variety of year groups.

Afterword

The next edition of this update will be sent out at the beginning of the next half term. If any urgent Covid related updates are needed for governors before that date then those will be sent out when they are released.

Circulation of this document is to all on the www.skills4bradford.co.uk website as governors/trustees. If you are a governor/trustee but have not received a link to this document please contact school.governor@bradford.gov.uk . This is currently a free resource from the Bradford School Governor Service.