

Governors' Update

September 2020

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Autumn Arrangements

The School Governor Service (SGS) is continuing to offer an online training programme as well as 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.

The telephone number and email address above are still in use, although the team is still not working in the office at the moment and there have been no indications that there can be any face to face training delivery in Council buildings as yet. Governors will be informed as soon as there are any changes.

Governor Meetings in the Autumn Term

The NGA have issued advice 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

Recent additions have been made to the online Training Programme:-

Wednesday 21 October, 6.00pm – 8.00pm, Headteacher Performance Management

A vital part of the role of governors is the effective performance management of the headteacher and this training is delivered by a Lead Achievement Officer who is very experienced in acting as the independent advisor to schools.

The training will take account of the impact of Covid-19 on schools and the performance targets of staff and also the latest guidance.

Free Course

Thursday 22 October 2.00-4.00pm Cyber Awareness and Safety Training

Or
Monday 7 December 6.00-8.00pm

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 this topic from the curriculum and Safeguarding aspects.

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 that 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)

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

Wednesday 4 November, 5.00pm – 6.30pm Wellbeing and Mental Health-Governors' Network (Second session 24 February 2021)

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

Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Curriculum

Governors should be aware that the statutory implementation of this new curriculum has been deferred to allow consultations to be completed that were interrupted by the lockdown. If a school has not completed that consultation this must still be done and the curriculum put in place for the start of the Easter term 2021 at the latest. Schools where the consultation has been completed are encouraged by the DfE to start delivery of that curriculum earlier in the school year. The DfE would like all schools to start with emotional wellbeing part of the PSHE curriculum as pupils are reintegrated during the autumn term.

All schools have to teach the curriculum set out by the DfE in the statutory guidance, although it is not compulsory for independent schools to teach health education. Updated guidance from the DfE is available [here](#).

Regional Schools Commissioner

The DfE have released guidance available [here](#) on the basis upon which the Regional Schools Commissioners (RSD) will make decisions in 2020/21 where they would normally take into account a school's results.

It explains that none of the data from the summer 2020 assessed results will be used. Instead the RSC will take account of:-

- Trends over time in educational performance data (e.g. 2017, 2018, 2019);
- Ofsted reports, including most recent reports and new reports once routine inspections resume. RSCs will not take action on the back of letters from Ofsted following assurance visits in autumn 2020, but may discuss these letters with Trusts;
- Parental perspective as defined by pupil allocations compared to the Published Admission Number (PAN);
- Pupil attendance (except spring/summer term 2020); -
- Recruitment, attendance and retention of staff, including the executive leadership team;
- School improvement strategy
- capacity and capability in managing the full return in the autumn and plans to ensure all pupils are catching up, especially disadvantaged pupils;
- Financial expertise within the Trust including financial experience on the board; and

- Leadership, governance, skills, capacity and capability of schools' and the Trust's leadership/board.

RSCs will also check whether Trust leaders have a COVID-19 contingency plan, including for remote education. They will seek assurance that Trust leaders are confident that the plans are appropriate in meeting the needs of all pupils.

Updated Guidance on provision of Covid-19 Test Kits for Schools

The guidance is available [here](#) and includes information on when tests should be provided and on ordering new test kits.

Update on handling Complaints during the Coronavirus (Covid -19) outbreak

'From the start of the autumn term, DfE expects schools to respond to new and existing complaints. However, we do not expect schools to respond if a tier 4 local restriction is in place or school access is restricted due to localised cases of coronavirus (COVID-19). Schools should still, however, engage with parents and pupils where possible.

[Contact your local council](#) or call the police on 101 if you're told a child is at risk. Schools and complainants can [contact DfE](#) for more information about school complaints.'

SEND Review of Services

This review was launched last year with the aim of improving services available to families and equipping school staff to respond to children's needs effectively. Gavin Williamson, Secretary of State for Education, has announced that the report will now be published in 2021, the delay being caused by the need for the DfE to adjust its workload to deal with Covid 19.

The NGA made a written submission to the review, which is available [here](#).

This includes:-

- The NGA's view that 'changes and investment are needed in the SEND system to deal with the unprecedented rise in demand for support and assist our most vulnerable pupils.'
- Highlighting the additional issues caused by Covid-19
- The responses to the annual survey of governors which will be published in October which highlighted the concerns of governors over the lack of available funding and the lack of funding for some local authorities to provide for EHCP.

There are calls for the DfE to investigate the increased demand for EHCP and the variation in provision between different local authorities.

The new focus on SEND within Ofsted inspections was welcomed and the NGA supported the call for the status of SEND within Ofsted inspections to be increased.

Updates from the NGA

NGA guidance is now only available to subscribing schools, including its advice on Covid-19.

Governor Code of Conduct.

The 2020 update of the NGA Code of Conduct for Governors is now available to download [here](#)

Ofsted Report 'Governing in Unprecedented Times'

This report presents findings of a small-scale research project to investigate the challenges for school governance during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. The research was carried out with the National Governance Association (NGA) and sought to understand the decisions and actions of governors and trustees in response to the short- and longer-term challenges presented by lockdown measures in England. The report is available [here](#)

'The key findings from the nine focus groups Ofsted and NGA carried out with governors and trustees in June and July are presented below.

The findings are organised into three phases:

- v short-term: responding to a crisis
- v medium-term: getting back to normal
- v long-term: planning for uncertainty.

These correspond to the different phases of governing boards' decision-making during the months of lockdown and partial closure of schools. Those governing told us that the work of governance in the immediate response to the crisis involved rapidly adapting to new challenges using web-based video conferencing. Some reported more frequent contact with senior leaders and changes to committees.

With regards to the medium-term challenges, governors and trustees reported different levels of support in planning the reopening of schools. They reported varied responses and levels of guidance from multi-academy trusts (MATs) and local authorities (LAs). There was also much criticism from governors and trustees of the support and guidance from central government.

In the longer-term, governing boards were particularly concerned about mental wellbeing and digital learning platforms for remote education. They expressed concern for all children getting back to normal schooling, in addition to those disadvantaged children most likely to have fallen more behind.

Updates from the Local Authority

Pre-Consultation on the Sufficiency of Specialist places for Children and Young People with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) across the Bradford District

The Council have just commenced a two week pre-consultation running from 28 September to 9 October on proposals to increase and expand the number of specialist places available to children and young people across the district.

'The Bradford District has experienced a year on year increase of children and young people requiring an Educational, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). As at 20th August 2020 the Local Authority is maintaining 4489 Educational, Health and Care Plans. There are also 13,281 children and young people who receive SEN Support.

Evidence shows there continues to be an increased demand for specialist places across all sectors.

We are now seeking the views of all stakeholders and interested parties on the development of further additional specialist places to be delivered across the Bradford District.

What are we Pre- Consulting on?

This pre-consultation phase is to share and gather information on the development of further specialist provision places to enhance the current specialist provision offer across the District.

The Local Authority is proposing to expand the following Resourced Provision from 1st April 2021 by:

Expanding of Long Lee Primary schools Resourced Provision from 10 to 16 places for Primary aged children with Social Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH)

The Local Authority is proposing to develop a Resourced Provision at Sandal Primary School from 1st April 2021 by:

Developing a new resourced provision within the school for up to 12 children primary aged children with Social Emotional and Mental Health needs

The consultation can be accessed [here](#)

Reformed EYFS Delivery in the District

The Statutory introduction of the Reception Baseline Assessment has been postponed to Autumn 2021 but some schools across the District signed up to trial this assessment.

This trial is still going ahead and so the new EYFS Framework will apply for all those who have confirmed agreement to become early adopter schools in 2020/21 and registered with the DfE.

Other schools, will continue to use the existing EYFS framework and supporting documentation. They will still be included in the LA Moderation cycle for Summer 2021 and agreement trial moderation workshops.

EYFSP data collection

2 different sets of data (EYFSP) will be collected across the Bradford district by the LA this year depending which EYFS is being used by the school. (One or the other, not both)

Non statutory Development Matters guidance

Early adopter schools can use the new Development Matters that aligns with the revised EYFS for children from birth through to end of EYFS.

Those who are **not** early adopters will still need to follow the existing EYFS framework, EYFSP handbook and existing Development Matters aligning with them.

Schools should not use both or decide themselves if they are going to use the early adopter framework/documents. (the DFE and LA have a list of who registered last Feb)

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Report on the Impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing of educational professionals

The charity Education Support has published a [report](#) which looked at the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing of educational professionals. The report was based on a YouGov survey of school staff, and highlighted the burden which the pandemic had placed on education professionals. For governing boards, who are generally either the employer of staff, or the body exercising employer responsibility, the wellbeing of staff will be a key concern as they try to navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Most notably, the report found that 52% of all teachers felt their mental health and wellbeing had declined during the pandemic. This included 60% of headteachers/principals.

The report also highlighted how the pandemic has affected staff in different ways. 58% of education professionals reported mainly working from home during lockdown, and so facing challenges such as ensuring pupils and students completed their work. In contrast, 32% of education professionals reported that they were still mainly working in their usual institution during lockdown, and so their biggest challenge was ensuring social distancing.

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.