

Governor School Improvement Update Autumn Term – September 2020 (01/20-21)

Welcome to our first Governor School Improvement Update for this academic year. We hope you have all managed to stay safe and well, and been able to enjoy some rest and relaxation over the summer holiday.

We know you share our excitement to see schools fully reopening, but the challenges of doing this safely must not be underestimated. That said, there are many 'normal' responsibilities that governors must still continue to fulfil, some of which are covered in this newsletter. If you have any queries or concerns please contact us (details on the last page) and we will do our best to provide advice, guidance and support.

We would value your support in sharing this update with fellow governors in order that it reaches as many colleagues as possible.

FINAL REMINDER - Head Teacher Performance Management (HTPM) Online Training

A final reminder to appraisal committee members that the LA will be running online HTPM training in September 2020. If your school is part of the local authority SLA, two governors are able to attend at no cost. If you do not buy in to the SLA, or you wish for additional governors to attend, the cost per session will be £25 for each governor.

Sessions will take place on 9, 10 and 11 September. Your school administrator can book through SLA online - each governor will need to provide an email address in order to receive the meeting invitation

The sessions which took place in July received overwhelmingly positive feedback and some really useful suggestions:

"The trainers managed to personalise the unusual situation of online training in a most professional manner and handled questions and feedback very positively. I felt very engaged with the whole process."

"Good thought and effective course design resulted in some appropriate audience participation, while using this 'new style' of distance training and learning."



Things to consider during autumn term meetings:

Governing bodies need to ensure that there are robust systems in place to continue to run meetings virtually, if this is required. Current guidance still recommends that visitors to school are kept to a minimum, however if meetings do have to take place (after school hours) then a full risk assessment must be completed.

Election of Chair and Vice Chair – If meeting virtually, it is recommended that the clerk emails governors in advance to ask for nominations. This allows for arrangements to be put in place for individuals to leave and re-join the meeting, allowing for discussion.

Committees – Boards should consider how effective the meeting structure is on an annual basis. This includes the use of committees, the membership, clerking, the frequency and timing of meetings etc. Terms of reference and delegated powers should also be reviewed annually.

Safeguarding – Boards must review safeguarding arrangements annually.

Roles and Responsibilities – Boards should appoint governors to specific roles and responsibilities as required – safeguarding, health and safety, Pupil Premium, SEND, links governors, etc. To support this and identify training needs, the LA recommends that a skills audit is undertaken e.g. the [NGA skills audit and matrix](#).

Code of Conduct, Declarations of Interest and Register of Gifts and Hospitality: Governors need to update and sign these annually. If done remotely, it is recommended that each governor agrees verbally during the meeting and then follows up by sending signed documents electronically to the clerk.

Standing Orders: Governors should review their standing orders annually. Schools are able to use any framework they choose – a [model template](#) is available on cyps.info.

Policy Review – This tends to be a rolling programme, but some policies must be reviewed on an annual basis. In response to COVID-19, the appraisal and pay policy should be amended prior to any review meetings taking place, to recognise that previous objectives may no longer be relevant. The DfE's [model appraisal policy](#) (March 2019) does state that 'objectives should be revised if circumstances change'.

Governor Induction: Boards need to consider how best to support new governors and if necessary adapt their usual induction programme.

Premium Funding – Plans for monitoring the impact of Pupil Premium, Sport Premium and Coronavirus Catch-Up Premium should be agreed.

Mental Health and Wellbeing - Governors should discuss mental health and wellbeing and review plans for supporting staff, pupils and families.

GOVERNOR RESPONSIBILITIES WHEN SCHOOLS RE-OPEN FULLY IN SEPTEMBER

[DfE guidance updated on the 7th September](#) regarding schools opening fully, highlights some of the **legal requirements** that school leaders need to be aware of when planning full re-opening in September 2020:

- Protect their employees, and others, from harm.
- Compliance with health and safety law.
- Revisit and update risk assessments (building on learning to date and the practices already developed) to consider additional risks and sensible proportionate control measures.
- Review and update wider risk assessments.
- Have active arrangements in place to monitor that controls are effective, working as planned and updated appropriately in line with public health advice.

[Annex A](#) provides additional detail of what is required of school employers in relation to health and safety risk assessments and managing risk.

All employers have a duty of care to their employees, and this extends to their mental health. Governing boards and school leaders should have regard to staff (including the headteacher) work-life balance and wellbeing.

There is no guidance within this document regarding governors accessing/visiting school sites from September 2020. However, it does state that 'schools should consider how to manage other visitors to the site' and 'where visits can happen outside of school hours, they should'. If the decision is made for governors to make visits to your school, please ensure that this is detailed in your risk assessment.

School attendance will be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term and the usual rules on school attendance will apply. Parents have a duty to ensure that their child attends school, schools must record attendance and follow up absence and schools have the option to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices. The board of governors should expect to receive attendance information from the head teacher as part of on-going monitoring.

As a governing body, your three core functions continue to be:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.
- Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils.
- Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.

In order to evaluate performance, governors must continue to have processes in place to monitor and review progress. Governor monitoring is critical to supporting and challenging strategic school improvement and since March 2020, boards have adapted to utilise a range of remote/online methods to support continuation of core duties. Many of these new and innovative approaches (i.e. shorter, sharply focused meetings) have enabled governors to be more effective and efficient. Moving into the 2020-21 academic year, it may be that some boards decide to continue with these methods an example of best practice (some examples in the table below).

Monitoring and Evidence	Remotely
Termly impact statements against improvement plan	Documents shared by clerk prior to GB meetings and discussed via remote meeting (i.e. Teams/Skype/Zoom/etc.). All meetings can take place remotely and still be as effective - <i>Electronic documents can be presented on screen, or emailed in advance. Handwritten documents (i.e. certificates, etc.) can be scanned or held up to the screen as evidence.</i>
Subject improvement plans	
Curriculum statement and strategies / Monitoring of planning	
Monitoring against the plan milestones	
HT report to governors	
CPD records	
Data / GAP analysis of tests / Assessment analysis	
Reports – Adviser / Ofsted / Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools	Virtual tour of the school by a school leader to show practice. Joining staff CPD remotely to validate the training. Accessing school assemblies, etc. via remote platforms
Curriculum learning walks / Lesson visits / Visits to validate the evidence	
Pupil and staff voice	
Book Scrutiny / Planning Scrutiny	
Safeguarding Visits Health and Safety Visits	
	Meeting with pupils and staff via a remote platform.
	Observing monitoring practice in school via a remote platform.
	If these visits must take place in person, governors need to ensure that an appropriate risk assessment is in place in advance of the visit.

The Key for School Governors has provided some advice and support entitled [‘what to monitor from September’](#).

SAFEGUARDING

In order to ensure compliance with the Education Act 2002 Section 175, and in order to identify areas for improvement, head teachers should provide their board of governors with an annual safeguarding report. NYCC provide schools with [a model template for this Annual Report to the Governing Body on Safeguarding Children](#).

The North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NYSCP) continues to update their webpage regularly with key safeguarding information. If you haven't yet subscribed to their monthly e-bulletin, you can access the August e-bulletin [here](#).

Governors must ensure that the school's child protection policy is reviewed annually. NYSCP have a link on this page to an [Addendum to Child Protection Policy COVID-19 school wider reopening arrangements for Safeguarding and Child Protection](#).

ACADEMIES UPDATE

The 2020 edition of the [Academies Financial Handbook](#) was published in June and is effective from the 1st September 2020.

The DfE is also reinforcing the value to all trusts in completing the [school resource management self-assessment tool](#) each year. This tool helps an academy/trust to appraise approaches in key areas of resource management and governance. It also provides a dashboard to see how your data compares to thresholds on a range of statistics that have been identified as indicators of good resource management.

The DfE guidance on [setting up an academies complaints procedure](#) was updated on the 16th July 2020 with best practice guidance for academies complaints and model policies for single academies and for academies in a multi-academy trust.

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE)

A reminder to boards of governors that all staff and governors must read and adhere to the latest [Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance](#) which was most recently updated on 1 September 2020, and which came into force on 1 September 2020.

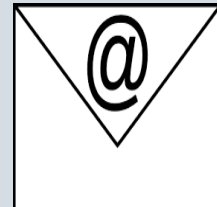
School Improvement Plan (SIP/ SDP)

School Improvement/Development Plans summarise the key priorities for a school each academic year and should also confirm the actions agreed to achieve or make progress for each priority set.

Annually, governors should evaluate the plan from the previous year and there should be acknowledgement given for what was achieved in the last academic year.

Governors should also review each target and decide if it should be carried forward. For 2020, governors need to acknowledge that unlike other years, priorities for schools may well have changed significantly and some targets may no longer be relevant or may be linked to results which were impacted by COVID-19 (e.g. linked to data results or attendance).

It is highly possible that schools will need to identify completely new priorities as a result of the coronavirus pandemic - e.g. linked to mental health, catch up learning, on line learning.



Governor
Email
Addresses

It is strongly recommended that governors should not use a personal or work email address for governor business. In order to support confidentiality and data security governors should use a school email address (provided by admin).

Complaints

Whilst schools were partially closed the DfE was clear that schools were not expected to handle new or existing complaints. However, with schools now re-opening fully boards should be prepared to deal with new and suspended complaints. This may involve face to face meetings if social distancing can be maintained, or by using video conferencing if this is acceptable to all parties.

RECOVERY CURRICULUM

Governors will need to be mindful that teachers and pupils will not be able to pick up where everything was paused on the 20th March 2020 when schools partially closed. In addition to this, the implementation of a recovery curriculum will not require staff to rethink content and rewrite materials. The focus will need to be on how to rebuild relationships and get back the strong sense of community within a school, to re-establish a sense of self and to relearn behaviour for learning skills. It is also about addressing gaps in children's learning, therefore mitigating possible underachievement that children may have as a result of the partial closure.

Pupil Wellbeing and Support

The [DfE guidance from the 7th September](#) recognises that pupils may be experiencing a variety of emotions in response to the coronavirus outbreak: some may need support to re-adjust to school, some may be reluctant to return to school and some may not be experiencing any challenges and are keen and ready to start in September.

The DfE, Public Health England and NHS England hosted a free webinar for school and college staff on the 9th July 2020 to set out how to support returning pupils and students. A recording of this is available through the link to the guidance above.

Relationships, Sex and Health Education modules focusing on mental health and wellbeing have been released early to support teachers with planning and preparation, given the importance of supporting pupils' mental health and wellbeing at this time. The RSHE curriculum is statutory for schools to deliver during 2020-21, [with commencement of the teaching of the new content no later than the summer term 2021](#).



Formative Assessment

Every child and young person will have had a unique experience with regard to their learning since March. There must be an understanding by school leaders of what pupils could do prior to lockdown, what the expectation was for attainment and progress by the end of the 2019-20 academic year (had school closure not taken place) and what they can do when they return to school in the autumn term. School leaders must not accept the autumn term baseline as a starting point for any pupil, without consideration of what they could do and were expected to achieve. Knowing what each pupil was on track to achieve will support school leaders to put in place appropriate interventions to mitigate against underachievement.



The government has allocated [catch-up premium funding](#) to every state-funded mainstream school, special school and alternative provision, which should be used for specific activities to support pupils to catch up for lost teaching in line with [curriculum expectations for 2020-21](#). Schools have the flexibility to spend the funding in the best way for their cohort and circumstances, and in line with its core functions the board of governors needs to ensure that money is well spent.

The [National Tutoring Programme](#) aims to support schools in providing a sustained response to the coronavirus pandemic and to provide a longer-term contribution to closing the attainment gap.

The Education Endowment Foundation has produced a [School Planning Guide 2020-21: practical, evidence-based guidance to support schools in the busy and unpredictable year ahead](#).

Updated DfE guidance for PE and Sport Premium for primary schools

Exercise and other physical activities have multiple benefits not only for physical health but also mental health and emotion wellbeing. Children who lead more active lifestyles are happier and more resilient - qualities essential in recovery from COVID-19.

In July 2020 the government announced that the PE and sport premium will continue for the 2020-2021 academic year.

In light of the pandemic, the DfE has also relaxed elements of this ring-fenced grant to allow any unspent funding to be carried over into the 2020/21 academic year to encourage improvements to the quality of PE, sport and physical activity for young people.

For more information on how the PE and sport premium for primary schools can be used, see the DfE guidance [here](#).

Schools must publish details of their use of PE and sport premium funding. For further information on what details are needed please refer to the DfE guidance [what maintained schools must publish online](#).



Exclusions – temporary changes

The temporary changes to the school exclusions process put into place earlier this year remain in force until 24th September 2020. Further details can be found [here](#).

STAFF WELLBEING: reducing workload

The [governance handbook](#) makes numerous references to workload considerations, and improving staff wellbeing through reducing workload is a crucial part of a board's responsibilities. The DfE has recently published a [report from the Education Development Trust](#) which looks at staff workload and schools' implementation of the [School Workload Reduction Toolkit](#).

The report made two key findings:

- Teacher designed interventions, which included approaches to marking and feedback, lesson planning, managing pupil data, internal communications, and lesson observation and monitoring did succeed in significantly reducing teacher time. This reduced workload led to an improvement in overall wellbeing.
- Reduced workload was associated with a period of pupil attainment and progress either being maintained, or improving, leading the report to argue "in some cases reducing workload outside of class may in fact improve attainment."

A governing body's commitment to staff wellbeing is reflected in the culture and ethos within a school community. To support boards, NGA has published [guidance](#) on managing teacher workload and wellbeing.



The government's **Get Information about Schools (GIAS)** webpage states that 'all maintained school governing bodies and academy trusts have a **legal duty** to provide details of governors for publication on the webpage'.

There are a number of schools where this information is missing, incomplete or out of date. You do not need a login to check if your school's information is accurate, simply access the web page [here](#). At the start of a new academic year it is vital that this system accurately displays your governing board membership. Staff in the school office will have the log-in details to be able to make any necessary updates. Please ensure that this system is updated as soon as possible, and kept up to date if the membership of the governing body changes at any time.

You must also ensure that the governor information on your school website is complete, accurate and up to date.

If you are a maintained school, we also need you to help us to keep our governor records up to date. If you use the NYCC clerking service, then your clerk has access to the system to make updates as necessary. If you do not use the NYCC clerking service please ensure that your clerk notifies us of any changes to your governing body by e-mailing governor.support@northyorks.gov.uk

Staff and Parent Governor Elections

These can now go ahead if required. Arrangements will need to be made to allow any isolating staff to vote either by post or by e-mail. You can consider running elections for parent governors electronically where you can be confident that the process can be managed in a secure way. If you are unable to hold elections, you can either continue to hold vacancies until such time as elections can be held. Governors whose terms of office have expired can still attend meetings in an advisory capacity if agreed by the governing board.

Throughout the autumn term 2020 local authority training for schools and school governors will be delivered remotely – initially by skype,

moving to Microsoft Teams during the second half of the term. Courses already live and available for booking are set out below:

9 Sept 2020	9:15 am – 11:30 am	Head Teacher Performance Management training for governors	SI-0920-T004
10 Sept 2020	4:15pm – 6:30pm	Head Teacher Performance Management training for governors	SI-0920-T005
11 Sept 2020	1:15pm – 3:30pm	Head Teacher Performance Management training for governors	SI-0920-T006
25 Sept 2020	1:15pm – 2:30pm	School Complaints – an overview for all governors and staff	SI-0920-T023
30 Sept 2020	4:45pm – 6:00pm	School Complaints – a focus on investigating complaints for head teachers and governors	SI-0920-T024
15 Oct 2020	4:15pm – 6:30pm	Being an Effective Chair	SI-1020-T018

Other governor training that will be offered this term will include:

- Introduction to Governance – a two-part course for all new governors, and governors who wish to updated themselves and their knowledge.
- Effective Monitoring for School governors – for all governors who want an overview of the scope and limitations of this role.
- Staff Hearing and Appeals: Governor Panels

All courses can be booked by school administrators via SLA online.

We also continue to offer bespoke advice, support and training for whole governing boards to meet your individual needs. Please contact us at governor.support@northyorks.gov.uk or your named Senior Education Adviser (SEA) to discuss your requirements.

In addition to the training on offer locally, the NGA continues to offer development training, funded by the DfE:



[Development for Chairs](#): fully funded by the DfE this programme can be accessed by two members of your governing board. It is aimed at aspiring chairs and/or those who currently chair who wish to develop their leadership skills.

[Development for Clerks](#): subsidised by the DfE this is a nine-month programme resulting in a fully accredited Level 3 qualification. (£99 per delegate)

Coming Soon

The launch of our new Service Level Agreement for Governance Support has been delayed because of the current pandemic.

We are aiming to offer all boards a full and comprehensive service, to include a range of high quality packages including online learning for governors and a dedicated portal for news, support and clerking. Details of the SLA will be shared with you once they have been finalised.



Who we are

Antonia Praud – Governance Officer
Elaine Trehitt – Governance Officer
Chrissy Richardson – Head of Clerking Service
Lindsay Miller – Senior Education Adviser

You can contact us via email or phone:

governor.support@northyorks.gov.uk

01609 798864