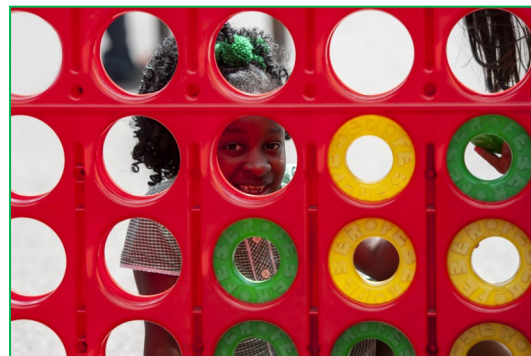


GOVERNOR UPDATE

Spring 2019

Welcome to our Spring Term update! As we reach the halfway point Governors have been reflecting on a busy school year so far. Since September, we have held two full Governing body meetings and each school has held a local subcommittee meeting. There have been a number of themes for discussion and we have been visiting the schools, meeting pupils and asking questions of the school leadership team in our role as 'critical friends'. Hackney Learning Trust has recently announced the intention to form a Hackney Schools Group Board to secure a system of peer support in a changing political climate. Governors have discussed the potential implications of this for our schools' partnership, linked with discussions over the strategic direction of our schools federation. We will continue to monitor developments and, whilst keen to maintain good links with Hackney Learning Trust, ensure that we continue to retain our autonomy and local governance of schools that has served us so well over recent years.



All three schools continue to be happy, safe and productive places to learn and we were interested and pleased with the outcomes of the recent parents' surveys, particularly the higher level of response than in previous years. We will be looking closely at the outcomes of these surveys with the school leadership teams to understand better where and how we can further improve what we do. We have also undertaken our own governors self-review to benchmark what we do against national expectations. This was a very useful exercise that has led us to undertake a further skills audit.

Our many successes as a school partnership have not gone unnoticed by others, and we are proud that our schools host so many best practice visits from other providers from as far afield as Sweden and Japan as well as UK schools who want to understand better how we maintain excellent outcomes for pupils and provide a wide and rich curriculum. Most of all however, we want to ensure that our schools continue to be community schools, giving the best possible guidance, education and support to local children and families.

We hope that this newsletter gives a flavour of what we do, if you would like to know more about our system of school governance then we also have a section on the school websites that you may find useful.

GOVERNOR VISIT TO HOXTON GARDEN SCHOOL



The Governor visit morning this term was to Hoxton Garden school and there was a focus on provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. We spent the first part of the morning visiting classrooms and meeting with the school leaders responsible for ensuring our children with Special Educational Needs receive the best provision. All three of our Federation schools hold the Inclusion Quality Mark, with two holding the coveted Flagship status, so we were keen to find out what our schools were doing right and what the school leadership team was doing to ensure we continue to support in the right ways. A group of children were also invited to present their learning and experiences of being at school, something that really helped us understand better what school is like from their perspective. Next term we are visiting Orchard School.





WHAT HAVE WE BEEN TALKING ABOUT?

Despite the challenging financial climate, all three schools continue to invest in staff and resources to support the wide range of need evident in our schools. We were pleased to recently approve the purchase of updated IT equipment including new laptops and iPads for every class. Each term we also hear about the schools' actions related to the behaviour policy and the very few exclusions that our schools undertake. The proposed National Funding Formula will affect Hackney school

funding, so we are carefully watching our school budgets to make sure that we can continue to offer these things, seeking to identify the potential savings of being a federation of three schools.

We have also overseen investment in pastoral care, such as our learning mentors, speech and language therapist support and therapeutic support from UP (www.up.org.uk) who work in our schools three days a week. We have been hearing from the Headteachers about the current challenges of teacher recruitment and how the leadership team are working hard to ensure that every class has high quality teaching. Our Magnificent old buildings require much maintenance and we are committed to ensuring that children learn in well presented, smart and comfortable environments. As well as ensuring that our buildings fully comply with fire risk and health and safety assessments, we have allocated sums to ensure that our playgrounds continue to provide quality play opportunities. This sits alongside a commitment to cycling, gardening, music, trips and subsidised clubs and activities.



SCHOOL COMPLAINTS PROCESS

We have recently updated our school complaints policy following new guidance from the Department of Education. We hope that you should never have a need for this, however issues inevitably arise from time to time. Our complaints policy is available on the school website and in our reception areas. Nearly all



complaints are best dealt with by the school leadership team and only very rarely would governors need to become involved. It is important that if there is a concern the class teacher and school staff are given the opportunity to work with you to resolve problems and individual Governors are not involved. We have a strict policy on how such matters should be dealt with to ensure fairness and transparency to all parties and the Chair of Governors will only become involved to decide on the best way forward if all other attempts to resolve issues have not been successful.

WHO ARE WE? GOVERNOR PORTRAITS

Cllr Ian Rathbone has been a councillor for Lea Bridge ward since 2002. He has been a school governor in Hackney for more than 30 years, and been Chair of Governors of several primary schools, with children who came through Hackney Schools. He has been a lecturer and Trainer in Journalism with the National Council for Training of Journalists (NCTJ). He is also chair of Hackney Community Law Centre and campaigning to improve legal aid services and general advice in the borough.



Lenna Marson has been a parent of children at Southwold school for over 7 years and a member of the existing Governing body since 2014. She has completed a number of courses, which have enabled her to gain the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding to make a difference as a governor. She has a strong interest in both community matters and in the education of children. She has extensive experience working with children in schools and is the parent of 3 boys aged 10 to 24.



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