COVID-19 Guidance for School Governors and Training Programme

2020

Harrow COUNCIL
LONDON

COVID-19 Guidance for School Governors

Stay at Home: Protect the NHS; Save Lives

This briefing aims to collate some key information and documents to support governors during the national response to the Coronavirus If there is anything further you need that we can help you with do please get in touch through Governor Services governorservices@harrow.gov.uk

In compiling this advice information is drawn from the National Governance Association, The Key and Herts for Learning.

SECTION A: SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS AND GOVERNORS

Governing bodies, parents, carers, wider communities and schools are working through unprecedented times and we do not underestimate the professional demands upon you at the current time.

Schools are advised to follow the information and guidance from central government. School leaders receive the daily DfE updates directly. As advice changes it is important to continue to review and to respond to the advice from Public Health England   and from the government regularly.

The collection of updated Department for Education (DFE) advice to schools is a useful place to review all the advice that schools have received and to check for updates.

Headteachers will be making operational decisions, in conjunction with their senior leadership teams and chairs of governing bodies, based on the circumstances of their own school. Schools are playing an essential role in remaining open for the children of key workers , children with an EHCP and those with a social worker.

Governors will need stay up to date on developments, so they are able to support their school leadership team and think strategically about the impact of this important work.

What is Harrow Council Doing for Residents?

The main Harrow Council website Harrow Council website provides general advice to Harrow residents including on what services are open, amended and temporarily closed.

For families that are in need additional support can be provided.

There is also a **Coronavirus Hotline** telephone number to help our most vulnerable residents **0208 901 2698**

Sources for Advice on School Governance

The Department for Education (DfE) published an update for Governing Boards in March 2020: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-governance-update/school-governance-update-march-2020

The National Governance Association (NGA) has dedicated area to support governors at this time, Coronavirus and its implications for school governance. This link includes a webinar, led by Steve Edmonds, director of advice and guidance, on Virtual Governance

The NGA has also made its **GOLD line Advice Service** available to all governing bodies that have questions about maintaining their business in the current circumstances. Email: gold@nga.org.uk or call **0121 237 3782**.

NGA GOLD members are asked to make a request through the usual route. GOLDline-The NGA Advice service

The Key for School Leaders is an up to date information service summarising the most important DfE and governor information and providing policy advice. COVID-19 pages are accessible to all Governors without payment.

Any additional information available on The Key website can be accessed by signing up for a 30 day free trial (follow the links).

How can Governing Bodies support schools at this time?

Chairs of governing bodies (CoG) will be liaising with their Headteachers to help school leaders to make suitable provision and to share information with the governing body. All governors should have an understanding of current plans and the impact of these arrangements on pupils and staff**.**

Herts for Learning have helpfully produced a **COVID-19 Model Headteacher Report** which aims to help headteachers to provide governing bodies with the information they need to monitor and challenge the impact of the current COVID-19 arrangements alongside existing school priorities. The intention is for governing bodies to use this instead of the standard HT report (not as well as) alongside the School Development Plan and Self Evaluation Form (SEF) to allow for focussed and pragmatic discussion during this time.

Chairs should work with headteachers about any reporting arrangements and should be conscious of the current demands being placed on all school leaders. *Sample areas for discussion be found in* **Appendix 1**

All school leaders retain a duty of care to staff, including to headteachers. *You will find some helpful advice on Mental Health and Wellbeing in* **Section C of this document**

What are the expectations on Governing Board meetings at the moment?

The National Governance Association has provided the following advice about the business priorities of governing boards at this time:

Governing boards are acutely aware of the enormous task that schools and their staff have in ensuring continuity of education and making the reduced provision work on the ground. It is therefore appropriate for all non-urgent business to be delayed and governing board meetings to be restricted to the following:

1. Business critical decisions (e.g. budget approval, ratifying school leadership appointments etc.)
2. Monitoring how the school is continuing to provide care for children who are vulnerable children with ECHP plans the children of key workers, associated risks, issues etc.
3. Any issues arising from how the building is currently being used and remote working for staff
4. Support being given to parents and carers to help them educate their children at home
5. Monitoring the wellbeing and welfare of pupils, staff and stakeholders

The DfE also urges governing boards to be pragmatic in what they cover in meetings during this time, and to be proportionate in the decisions that they are planning to take. It is expected that governors will focus on urgent, time-bound decisions and will be likely to defer non-urgent decisions/agenda items until future meetings; *suggested wording to include in minutes: 'Deferral of usual summer term agenda. Approval of minutes and matters arising from original FGB meeting will be included later in the academic year.'*

You can then move onto the above items as your agenda, listed 1 to 5. Please remember to ensure you still allow for declaration of interests and any other business, and *pay particular attention to point 5 - Monitoring the wellbeing and welfare of pupils, staff and stakeholders*

How do we conduct virtual meetings?

In line with guidance on public health and school closure due to the coronavirus, **governing boards should meet remotely**. The Key has some useful information on setting up and running remote meetings, including examples of virtual governance policies: Meetings: remote attendance | The Key for School Governors

The Department for Education's March governance update confirms that governing boards can agree remote meeting arrangements without first meeting in person, and that the powers to arrange remote meetings or remote attendance (set out on the next page) are unchanged.

Maintained schools

Governing Boards have the power to 'approve alternative arrangements for governors to participate or vote at meetings of the governing board including but not limited to by telephone or video conference'. This is set out in regulation 14 of The School Governance (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) (England) Regulations 2013, and also applies to committee meetings.

Academies

Any trustee can attend meetings remotely under the DfE's model articles of association for academy trusts (article 126), as long as:

- They've given notice of their intention to do so and provided the telephone number on which they can be reached and/or the videoconferencing platform they'll be using at least 48 hours before the meeting, **and**
- The trustees have access to the appropriate equipment

The model articles add that "if after all reasonable efforts it does not prove possible for the person to participate by telephone or video conference, the meeting may still proceed with its business provided it is otherwise quorate". *Please do refer to your own articles of association though in case they differ.*

Any decisions to cancel meetings should be agreed with the CoG and Headteacher but do consider how you can use this time effectively such as on policies coming up for review or outstanding governor visit reports.

More information can be found on the NGA website, where you will find details on business continuity and holding virtual meetings.

What are the safeguarding responsibilities of governing bodies?

Following the publication of interim safeguarding guidance for the COVID-19 period which is relevant to all schools, the NGA has produced an information sheet containing the key points for governing bodies.

The important duties of governing bodies set out in part 2 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) to safeguard and promote the welfare of children continue even when schools and colleges are operating in a way that is fundamentally different to business as usual.

The information sheet covers the ways the governing bodies ensure this by maintaining contact with their school leaders and designated safeguarding leads, urgently approving revisions to policies and procedures which accurately reflect new arrangements and maintaining their oversight of safeguarding during the period when other non-urgent business has been put on hold.

The information sheet also refers to a template annex to Child Protection policy produced by Browne Jacobson, the approved legal partner of the NGA. The template covers all statutory obligations outlined in the interim guidance

The Harrow Strategic Safeguarding Partnership (HSSP) has now been set up to identify and support through agreed resourcing, the priorities for both Harrow Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB) and Harrow Safeguarding Adults Board (HSAB).

In addition, to support schools' understanding about how to follow safeguarding procedures when planning remote education strategies and teaching remotely, the DfE have published the following guidance: Safeguarding and remote education during coronavirus (COVID-19)

How are schools supporting vulnerable children?

Being at an early years setting, school or college can be an important lifeline for many vulnerable children and young people, particularly where their needs cannot be met safely at home or where they may be at risk of harm. This guidance sets out the different groups of vulnerable children and young people who may benefit from being encouraged to attend, where appropriate, and how the DfE recommend providers follow up on non-attendance.

The government encourages vulnerable children and young people to attend educational settings unless they have underlying health conditions that put them at severe risk. This guidance on social distancing is set out to help educational settings support safe provision for these children.

For children and young people with an education, health and care (EHC) plan, the Local Authority, in collaboration with educational settings and parents, will make a risk assessment to determine whether a child or young person with SEND is able to have their needs met at home, and be safer there than attending an educational setting. This risk assessment guidance provides more details.

How are schools supporting children entitled to Free School Meals (FSM)?

We know that schools are concerned about the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on pupils eligible for benefits-related free school meals. This guidance on Free School Meals (FSM) explains what schools should do to make sure eligible pupils have continued access to free school meals where the pupil is not attending school. Importantly, schools can make their own provision rather than use the national voucher scheme and they will be reimbursed for this.

Information regarding which pupils should continue to attend school is available in the guidance on maintaining educational provision. Schools which are open for the children of critical workers and vulnerable children should provide meal options for staff and children who are in school, and free school meals for all eligible pupils in attendance. Further details are set out in this guidance.

How will my school recoup the additional costs incurred?

The DfE have provided guidance which sets out the financial support that has been put in place to ensure schools can focus on the vital role they are playing at this time. While we do not know how long the current situation will continue, this guidance covers support for schools up to the end of the 2019 to 2020 summer term, and makes provision for schools to claim for additional costs incurred from increased premises related costs, support for FSM and additional cleaning

Section B: Training for Governors – Summer Term 2020

Whilst schools are closed and face to face services are limited, we have put together a suggested list of e-learning modules that can be accessed by governing bodies during the summer term to ensure that governors still have access to high quality professional development in this difficult period. These modules have been selected from Governors for Schools, Modern Governor and NGA Learning Link and cover a range of topics.

You will find details of this programme at the end of this document in **Appendix 2**

There is also the Harrow Safeguarding Children's Board (HSCB) training offer.

In addition, at a national level, the organisations listed in this link are contracted by the DfE to offer governance leadership and clerking development programmes. For enquiries about these programmes please contact the providers directly.

Section C: Mental Health and Wellbeing

Harrow's Educational Psychology Service (EPS) has developed advice for families on well being. This advice is of value to you as a governor of a school and helpful in considering your own well being at this time.

www.harrow.gov.uk/childwellbeing

The NHS has also provided a range of advice on mental wellbeing; including their '5 Steps to Mental Wellbeing'

https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/

This page also links to several very helpful pages on a range of metal health and well being issues and approaches. Please make yourself familiar with this advice.

Harrow Council has worked in partnership with the Young Harrow Foundation (YHF) who have produced a helpful portal where families can find out more about services that support mental health and well being and how to access them.

For families looking for a safe place to speak, for one to one and peer mentoring support, music, fitness and much more the HYF portal is here.

Many of these services are free

Appendix 1

Some areas for discussion with school leaders

Have there been any suspected or confirmed cases of coronavirus in the school?

How many pupils fall into the key worker/vulnerable group category?
- What are your expectations around attendance for pupils who fall into these categories?
- How are you encouraging attendance?
- Have you been consulted on risk assessments for children or young people with SEND to establish whether they will attend school?

How will the day to day work continue in terms of teachers and support staff?

- What support is in place for home working?
- How will staff be accountable to leaders for the work they are undertaking from home?
- How will teachers liaise with pupils who are home working?
- What are the expectations on staff around setting and marking work, how are you ensuring that this is consistent between classes?
- Are all staff and children confident about how to stay safe whilst working and learning remotely?

Are contingency plans in place and active for…….?
- continuing pupil learning for all
- ensuring vulnerable pupils not at school have what they need to progress
- communicating with stakeholders
- Is your emergency plan/business continuity plan up to date?
    - is it fit for purpose?

What has been communicated to parents/carers/staff and pupils
- Are they updated on the latest guidance?
- Do they have a named contact in school to come to with questions?
- Are they aware of instances in which they would need to isolate?

How is staff wellbeing and morale?
- What steps are you taking to minimise the emotional/mental impact of the situation on pupils and staff?

Appendix 2: Online Learning Opportunities for Governors – Summer Term 2020

In order to help ensure governing bodies have access to training during the summer term, we have put together a selection of e learning courses, based on the courses that were scheduled as part of the HSSE Governor Training Package.

Courses are drawn from the platforms listed below - more courses are available on each of these platforms so do browse them.

Governors for Schools is open for all and can be registered for upon signing up to the first module
https://www.governorsforschools.org.uk/

Modern Governor – If your school uses Governor Hub you can access Modern Governor Courses –
https://moderngovernor.governorhub.com/?redirect=0

NGA Learning Link – Schools who have signed up to the HSSE Governor package will have access to this platform
https://nga.vc-enable.co.uk/Login/Login?ReturnUrl=%2f

Registration instructions for NGA Learning Link

1. Visit https://nga.vc-enable.co.uk/register to find the online self-registration form.

2. Add your details to the self-registration form in the following order:
- Your first name
- Your last name
- Your email
- Your phone number (optional)
- Your governance role title (optional)
- Your school or academy – use the search box and make sure to select the right one using the postcode*

3. Click the green register button to submit your application for approval.

4. Approval is not immediate and you must wait for email confirmation of approval. It can take time to receive this email particularly if your application is submitted over a weekend or in the evening.

5. Your confirmation email will be sent to you. Once you receive your email confirmation, which includes your login details you can login to Learning Link and start to use it whenever you want to.

Platform	Area of focus and course title	Details	Time commitment	Web link
	New Governors			
NGA Learning Link	Structures, roles and responsibilities - Governance: your role, your responsibilities, your organisation	This module introduces some key features of school governance common to all types of school organisation - the three core governance functions, the DfE Governance handbook, expectations of those who govern and the Competency framework for governors, the essential ingredients of an effective governing board including the important role of your clerk. It also provides you with the opportunity to reflect on the type of school organisation which you govern so that you understand the context in which you govern, the pupils you are responsible for, the education that should be provided and where your funding comes from.	2-3 hours	https://nga.vc-enable.co.uk/Learn/Learning/LearnerRecord?reference=800b46a1-1678-4bb7-9f4e-181c37f9bb12
Governors for Schools	Governor Induction	Provides a comprehensive introduction to the school governor role. It looks at the core responsibilities of governors and some of the key activities that they carry out.	1-2 Hours	https://www.governorsforschools.org.uk/login/?redirect_to=https://www.governorsforschools.org.uk/e-learning/course/governor-induction/

	Data Training			
NGA learning Link	Pupil Success & Wellbeing - Progress and attainment: using data to improve educational outcomes	This module will provide an overview of how governing bodies can monitor the progress of pupils using data. It is a very useful overview for those who have not been exposed to this sort of activity.	2-3 hours	https://nga.vc-enable.co.uk/Learn/Learning/LearnerRecord?reference=46405c79-d9a5-48df-9c7a-509da3c3baf9
Governor for Schools	Performance Data for New Governors	Performance data for new governors covers the key metrics and measures governors need to understand in order to provide effective oversight of pupil and school performance.	1-2 hours	https://www.governorsforschools.org.uk/login/?redirect_to=https://www.governorsforschools.org.uk/e-learning/course/performance-data-for-new-governors/
	School Structures and curriculum			
NGA Learning Link	Pupil Success & Wellbeing - Your organisation: understanding school structures and what children should learn	This module provides essential background knowledge about the sort of curriculum that your school organisation should provide and how and why your pupils should be assessed and what your governance role is in relation to this. It explains the responsibilities your governing board has to meet the needs of all pupils including those with special educational needs and disabilities and those who are disadvantaged and how to use pupil and other premiums. It tackles how the governing board can discharge its duty to ensure effective behaviour management and to ensure compliance with equalities and discrimination legisalation	2-3 hours	https://nga.vc-enable.co.uk/Learn/Learning/LearnerRecord?reference=b4883d97-9dbe-4d31-9c52-70da195160fc

	Safeguarding			
	Safeguarding: The Governor's Role	This module will provide an overview of the safeguarding responsibilities of a school and the governors role in ensuring that these	1-2 hours	https://nga.vc-enable.co.uk/Learn/Learning/LearnerRecord?reference=57ef4cf4-bad3-4300-ada5-9c644f236f28
	Early Years Foundation stage			
	Pupil Success & Wellbeing - Early Years Education	This Module covers the educational framework within Early Years Education	1-2 Hours	https://nga.vc-enable.co.uk/Learn/Learning/LearnerRecord?reference=e671d3c1-0ff1-4d93-b3b3-62a44ec3b9f0
	Finance			
Governors for schools	**Finance for New Governors**	Finance for new governors covers the key principles of the schools financial framework, including the funding system and accountability framework.	1-2 Hours	https://www.governorsforschools.org.uk/login/?redirect_to=https://www.governorsforschools.org.uk/e-learning/course/finance-for-new-governors/
	Change Management			
Governor Hub	**Change Managements Parts 1, 2 and 3**	This selection of modules describes the need for change management within Organisations when appropriate in schools and will also detail how the process can look like and how to avoid the pitfalls.	2-3 Hours	https://moderngovernor.governorhub.com/enrol/index.php?id=83

	Other Topics			
NGA Learning Link	Good Governance - Handling Delicate Situations	This takes a look at some of the difficult situations that may occur as governors and as the chair and provides strategies for how to effectively deal with these in appositive and productive manner	1-2 hours	https://nga.vc-enable.co.uk/Learn/Learning/LearnerRecord?reference=96947421-d73f-4c55-84b2-6efa58df3f3a
Governors for Schools	Driving School Improvement	Driving School Improvement covers the role of governors in the school improvement process. It looks at setting a clear and compelling vision for the future, ensuring effective self-evaluation is taking place, and approving and monitoring clear and costed plans for improvement.	1-2 Hours	https://www.governorsforschools.org.uk/login/?redirect_to=https://www.governorsforschools.org.uk/e-learning/course/1776/
NGA Learning Link	Compliance - Health and Safety	This module will help you to understand the essential health and safety responsibilities of governors and trustees. It also outlines legal duties in relation to health and safety, gives practical guidance about the role of governing boards in managing health and safety and tells you where you can obtain further information about key areas.	1-2 hours	https://nga.vc-enable.co.uk/Learn/Learning/LearnerRecord?reference=0b4ba5c2-b393-4ede-94da-b8085fdef379
NGA Learning Link	Executive Leaders - Headteacher Appraisal and Capability	This will help governors understand what their statutory responsibilities are surrounding the headteacher appraisal process.	1-2 hours	https://nga.vc-enable.co.uk/Learn/Learning/LearnerRecord?reference=e205e406-b1f0-4632-8d18-2ef13b47c4f6

Governor For Schools	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities for governors	The Session will look at the definition of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), how the needs of pupils wit SEND are met in schools, funding for SEND provision and the role of the board and link governor in securing effective provision for pupils with SEND	1-2 hours	https://www.governorsforschools.org.uk/login/?redirect_to=https://www.governorsforschools.org.uk/e-learning/course/short-course-special-educational-needs-and-disabilities-for-governors/
Governor Hub	Questioning Techniques	This module provides advice and practical examples of questioning techniques which can be used for recruitment interviews as well as other situations. This module may be useful where governors are asked to be involved in the recruitment process for a headteacher or other senior leader.	1 -2 Hours	https://moderngovernor.governorhub.com/enrol/index.php?id=101