

## Manchester City Council Report for Information

**Report to:** Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 10 March 2021

**Subject:** School Governance Update

**Report of:** Director of Education

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### Summary

This report outlines the support and future planned developments that the City Council will provide to assist with fostering effective school governance across the City including governor recruitment, governor training, development and resources.

### Recommendations

To note the report and make any comments about the work that has taken place and is planned to support effective governance.

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**Wards Affected:** All

<b>Environmental Impact Assessment</b> - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city
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Effective Governance strives to support a learning and education system that enables children to be informed and understand environmental issues and the negative impact of carbon; promoting safe and healthy lives.
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<b>Our Manchester Strategy outcomes</b>	<b>Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS</b>
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Effective school governance strives to support improved educational outcomes which will enable Manchester's young people to contribute to the economic growth and take advantage of the job opportunities created
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Supporting effective school governance in the City to increase accountability of schools in order to increase the quality of education and educational outcomes for children and young people. Improving educational outcomes amongst the Manchester school population is essential for young people to gain qualifications and contribute to Manchester's economic success.

A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	School governors are volunteers and the role assists residents to increase their employability skills and become actively involved in their communities. Effective school governance strives to ensure all children and young people have the opportunity to fulfil potential and therefore make a contribution in their communities and beyond.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Effective school governance strives to increase the quality of education provision which will make Manchester an attractive place to live and work and create schools of choice. Investment in modern, energy efficient and high quality education infrastructure drives reductions in carbon across the estate of schools.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Effective school governance strives to increase the quality of education provision which will enhance the City's attractiveness to potential residents and contribute to the development of high quality neighbourhoods.

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### Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

- Report to Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee - 5 March 2019, School Governance Update

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The City Council recognises the high level of expectations and challenges that face governors in the City, especially through the recent Covid-19 pandemic. There has been a plethora of new government guidance and revisions released over recent months for governors to understand and navigate their way through. This has been necessary in order to understand the changes required throughout the national lockdowns and to manage all pupils safely back into the school environment, along with managing the impact on school budgets and the mental health and well-being of our staff and pupils. Governors have successfully adapted to develop virtual solutions to maintain their role in holding our school leaders to account and have provided a high level of support to leaders through these extra ordinary times in order to ensure that our children and young people are safe, well and able to learn at home or in school.
- 1.2 The City Council is fully committed to supporting school governors and trustees and wishes to thank this large volunteer workforce for the continued commitment, professionalism and expertise that they provide in Manchester. In addition, the City Council recognises the support provided by a range of employers in the City who support their staff to contribute to this vital role, along with supporting their development.

## **2.0 Governor Recruitment**

- 2.1 Local Authority (LA) governor applications are made through the Manchester Jobs Website, which contains a job description and fact sheet to assist prospective volunteers to understand the role. Candidates are invited to interview with two senior officers and vetting checks are undertaken. The process provides an opportunity to understand more fully the skills and qualities of the prospective governors, to support appropriate LA governor nominations to be made to maintained schools and to meet their skills requests. Feedback from recent applicants has been that they have found the interview very enjoyable and it has enabled them to meet Council staff and find out more about the role. All volunteers who are interviewed are provided with induction training to support them to understand the governor role and Manchester's priorities.
- 2.2 In addition, to nominating LA governors to maintained schools, schools and academies also approach the School Governance Unit directly for assistance with co-opted governor and academy board vacancies.
- 2.3 Governor recruitment was paused between March 2020 - July 2020 as there was reduced capacity across the Education Department due to the support being provided to schools in the response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the School Governance Lead was leading on communications to schools.
- 2.4 Since September 2020 we have undertaken 21 virtual interviews, 14 (67%) of the applicants are now in the process of being nominated and appointed by

governing bodies. We are currently progressing and inviting 16 applicants to interviews in March and April.

- 2.5 There are currently 7 LA governor vacancies in the City: Charlestown Primary, Crosslee Primary, St Dunstan's RC Primary. St John's RC Primary, St Luke's CE Primary, St Malachy's RC Primary and St. Philip's CE Primary. In addition, 7 maintained schools have registered co-opted governor vacancies with us and 7 academies have also asked for support in sourcing board/trust members.
- 2.6 There are currently 11 LA governor vacancies, 4 co-opted governor vacancies in maintained schools and 2 vacancies in academies in progress.
- 2.7 The following tables outline the data with respect to governor recruitment since September 2018:

#### Governor Recruitment Sept 2018 – Feb 2021

Application Stage	Sept 2018 to Sept 2019	Sept 2019 to Sept 2020	Sept 2020 to Feb 2021
<b>Applications in total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>23</b>
LA governors placed	5	6	0
Co-opted governors placed	2	0	0
Academy governors placed	2	0	0
Placements in progress	3	7	7
Awaiting placement	0	7	2
Invited to interview March/ April	0	6	10
Withdrawn/unresponsive	11 (48%)	8 (24%)	4 (17%)

#### Applications by Ethnicity Sept 2018 – Sept 2020

Ethnicity	Sept 2018/2019	Sept 2019/2020
Total number of applications	23	34
White British	16 (69%)	13 (38%)
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	0 (0%)	2 (6%)
Asian or Asian British - Chinese	0 (0%)	1 (3%)
Asian or Asian British - Indian	1 (4 %)	5 (15%)
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	2 (9%)	3 (9%)
Black or Black British - Black African	0 (0%)	5 (15%)
Black or Black British - Black British	0 (0%)	2 (6%)
Black or Black British - Black Caribbean	2 (9%)	1 (3%)
Other Ethnic Backgrounds - Any other ethnic background	0 (0%)	1 (3%)
Other Ethnic Backgrounds - Unknown	0 (0%)	1 (3%)
Prefer not to say	2 (9%)	0 (0%)

2.8 The diversity of applications received has increased with 22% in 2018/2019 compared to 63% in 2019/2020 being from BAME groups.

2.9 The School Governance Unit is planning to engage with The National Governance Association who are working with a range of partners including Diverse Educators to examine their work and research. In addition, a local focus group of governors will be formed to explore ways to reach out further and support governors from a diverse range of communities.

### **3.0 Governor Support**

3.1 Chairs' briefings continued virtually in the Summer and Autumn Terms 2020. Two 1 hour sessions were offered in place of the 3 hours sessions that normally take place at three venues across the City termly. Each governing body is invited to send along two people and governors do not need to be a chair to attend. The main focus at recent meetings has been on the support required throughout Covid-19 including: risk assessments, safeguarding, head teacher and staff well-being, finance and approaches to virtual governance. Feedback has been positive with many people saying that the virtual environment has made attendance easier, however people do miss the face to face interaction and lively debate.

3.2 Attendance at chairs' briefings has improved on last year when we had an average of 62 governors attend sessions each term and 50% of schools and academies represented across the academic year at meetings.

- Spring Term 2020 - 82 Governors
- Autumn Term 2020 - 83 Governors
- 57% of schools and academies represented across the 2 meetings

3.3 Chairs' briefings in the Spring and Summer 2021 terms will explore: the continued support and role of governors required during the Covid – 19 pandemic, headteacher, staff and pupil mental health and well-being, financial impact, recovery planning and future ways of working for governors.

3.4 In addition, we have been providing regular email updates to governors across the City to keep them abreast of the DfE guidance changes and support being provided by the LA to support schools throughout the pandemic. Guidance for governors has been provided around the DfE requirements for remote learning. The [Schoolshub Website](#) now has a dedicated area with resources and information to support governors and school leaders with Covid-19. The School Governance Lead and the Senior School Quality Assurance Officers (SSQAs) have been available to provide bespoke support and advice to schools when required.

3.5 The Council offers all schools and academies in Manchester, an annual Quality Assurance Report which is undertaken by an external quality assurance professional, to examine their self-evaluation and development priorities against the Ofsted Framework. The report in the Autumn Term 2020 this year focused on Leadership and Management and the Quality of

Education, including the continuing challenges of working with Covid-19. From a school governance perspective, it explored how schools had adapted their governance model to ensure that their scrutiny role was still effectively taking place.

Information from the Quality Assurance Reports and feedback from governors outlines the following points about how governance has been progressing this year in response to Covid-19:

- Governing bodies have developed virtual approaches to their role and responsibilities
- Governing body meetings have been shorter and more focussed at times
- Most governing bodies have seen increased attendance at meetings
- Some governing bodies have maintained committees and others have covered all business within full governing body meetings during this period
- Leaders have provided more detailed updates to governors as school visits have not been possible
- Many chairs of governors have provided weekly support to head teachers when it was felt this would be supportive
- Governing bodies are considering continuing with some remote meetings e.g. for urgent business and committee meetings
- Many governing bodies feel that face to face full governing body meetings is the preferred approach, along with school visits to inform and support their work

3.6 We have supported the development of 2 federations in the City since March 2020. There are now 7 federations in the City. A federation is when two or more maintained schools operate under a single governing body, holding the Executive Head Teacher to account for the performance of both schools. Federating schools maintain their DfE number and are inspected as individual schools by Ofsted.

3.7 The School Governance Unit is planning to develop a range of resources to support governing bodies with respect to governor induction, building on the work already provided to governors who are interviewed through our governor recruitment programme. In addition, we are going to develop a focus group of parent governors and head teachers in the City to examine the challenges faced with recruiting and supporting parent governors to understand their role. This will inform the development of a range of resources to support schools and parent governors specifically.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

4.1 There will undoubtedly continue to be further challenges for governors to navigate through during the Covid-19 pandemic. Support will be required to assist governors through the recovery phase including examining the financial impact on their school budgets, ensuring that the school workforce and all pupils are able to safely and effectively be on site and that high quality education is provided. It is clear however, that we have a dedicated group of volunteers in the City who have embraced the challenges and continued to

support our schools, developing virtual solutions and maintaining their role with a high level of professionalism.

4.2 Priorities for the School Governance Strategy in the City over the next 12 months will include:

- Support to governing bodies to address priorities in the recovery phase of the Covid- 19 pandemic through chairs' briefings, email updates and resources on the Schoolshub Website.
- Development of governor induction resources and guidance.
- Development of resources and guidance for schools to use to support with parent governor recruitment and understanding of the role.
- Continued monitoring of the recruitment of BAME governors and exploration of the work and research being undertaken by The National Governance Association and their partners to ensure we are reaching out and engaging volunteers from a diverse range of communities.
- Continued challenge to governing bodies to review the diversity of their membership.
- Continued focus in School Quality Assurance Reports on governance to maintain and challenge the role that school governance plays as part of the leadership and development priorities in school development plans.