

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 11 January 2023

Subject: School Governance Update

Report of: Director of Education

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 support 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.

Wards Affected: All wards

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

The report highlights work that has been undertaken and is planned with governors to support the target for a zero-carbon City.

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.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments

The report highlights the continued work to promote Equality, Diversity and Inclusion to governors and the part it plays in developing effective governance.

Our Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
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 their 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
- Report to Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee - 10 March 2021, School Governance Update

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 Governors continue to support our schools and families as they navigate through times of financial pressures and the cost of living. In addition, governors will play a role in the implementation of some of the proposals set out in the White Paper published by the Government in April 2022, 'Opportunity for all: Strong schools with great teachers for your child'. In particular, the proposal that all schools will join a Multi-Academy Trust by 2030 which in spite of the Schools Bill not progressing is still the DFE's direction of travel. Joining a Multi-Academy Trust is a governing body decision.
- 1.3 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.

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, in order to meet their skills requests.

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.

- 2.2 Information about becoming a governor is also available on the [Council Website](#). Videos of some of our governors talking about their experiences have been developed recently and will also be available to view on the website shortly.

Virtual Sessions are now offered so that prospective volunteers can find out more about the role prior to applying and the sessions are also advertised via Eventbrite. Governance was showcased as part of the Council's social media campaign for National Volunteer Week in May 2022.

In addition, the School Governance Unit reaches out to volunteers who are registered on the Department of Education (DfE) funded governor recruitment site [Inspiring Governance](#).

- 2.3 Feedback from recent applicants has been that they have found the interview process very enjoyable, and it has helped them understand the requirements of the role more fully. All volunteers who are interviewed are provided with induction training to support them to understand the governor role and Manchester’s priorities.
- 2.4 From September 2022 to November 2022 we have had 9 new applications. 1 applicant has been placed, 2 placements are in progress, 1 applicant is having pre-placement checks undertaken and 5 are awaiting interviews in January.
- 2.5 At the end of November 2022 there were 9 LA governor vacancies outstanding in the City: All Saints CE Primary (Newton Heath), Baguley Hall Primary, Charlestown Primary, Lancasterian School, Ravensbury Primary, Ringway Primary, St Joseph’s RC Primary, St Willibrord’s RC Primary and The Divine Mercy RC Primary.

In addition, 24 co-opted vacancies from maintained schools and 4 academy governor vacancies have been registered with the School Governance Unit. One of the co-opted and one of the academy vacancies are in process.

- 2.6 The following tables outline the data with respect to governor recruitment since September 2019. The data does not reflect the entire cohort of governors in the City but does provide information on a much smaller cohort of new recruits.

Governor Applications September 2019 – September 2022

Application Stage	Sept 2019 to Sept 2020	Sept 2020 to Sept 2021	Sept 2021 to Sept 2022
Applications in total	34	47	25
Governors placed	12 (35%)	28 (60%)	9 (36%)
Placements in progress	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	1 (4%)
Awaiting placement	3 (9%)	2 (4%)	0 (0%)
Pre-Placement Checks	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	8 (32%)
Awaiting Interview	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
Withdrawn/Unresponsive	19 (56%)	16 (34%)	6 (24%)

Governor Vacancies and Appointments up to end of November 2022

Governor Vacancies/ Appointments	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
No of LA Governor vacancies at the start of the academic year	14	22	17	13
LA governors appointed	4	13	10	2 filled 2 in process*
Other governor vacancies assisted with	4	6	12	2 in process*

** Up to end of November 2022*

Applications by Ethnicity September 2019 – September 2022

Ethnicity	Sept 2019/20	Sept 2020/21	Sept 2021/22
Total number of applications	34	47	26
White/White British-English/Welsh/Scottish/NI/British	13 (38%)	24 (51%)	16 (61%)
White/ White British – Eastern European	0 (0%)	5 (11%)	0 (0%)
White/ White British - Other	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
Asian/Asian British - Bangladeshi	2 (6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Asian/Asian British - Chinese	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Asian/Asian British - Indian	5 (15%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
Asian/Asian British - Pakistani	3 (9%)	7 (15%)	0 (0%)
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British -Black African	5 (15%)	2 (4%)	3 (11%)
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British - Black British	2 (6%)	2 (4%)	1 (4%)
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British - Black Caribbean	1 (3%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British – Somali	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British – Other Black	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups - Black Caribbean and White	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups - Black African and White	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1(4%)
Other Mixed/multiple ethnic group	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	1 (4%)
Any other ethnic background	2 (6%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
Prefer not to say	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	2 (8%)

Applications by Protected Characteristic September 2019 – September 2022

Characteristic	Sept 2019 to Sept 2020	Sept 2020 to Sept 2021	Sept 2021 to Sept 2022
Applications in total	34	47	26
Gender			
Male	18 (53%)	15 (32%)	8 (31%)
Female	16 (47%)	31 (66%)	17 (65%)
Prefer not to say	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	1 (4%)
Age			
16-25	4 (12%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
26-39	2 (6%)	5 (11%)	0 (0%)
40-64	0 (0%)	3 (6%)	0 (0%)
Not provided	28 (82%)	39 (83%)	25 (96%)
Sexual Orientation			
Heterosexual / Straight	32 (94%)	40 (85%)	21 (81%)
Gay	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	3 (11%)
Bisexual	0 (0%)	2 (4%)	1 (4%)
Prefer not to say	2 (6%)	4 (9%)	1 (4%)
Disability			
No	32 (94%)	47 (100%)	25 (96%)
Yes	2 (6%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
Religion			
Christian	2 (6%)	4 (9%)	0 (0%)
Muslim	2 (6%)	3 (6%)	0 (0%)
No Religion	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
Prefer not to say	1 (3%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
Not provided	28 (82%)	39 (83%)	25 (96%)

- 2.7 The National Governance Association (**NGA National Survey September 2022: [School and trust governance 2022 - National Governance Association \(nga.org.uk\)](https://www.nga.org.uk)**) answered by 4,185 respondents noted that number of governing board vacancies is at its highest since 2016. 38% of respondents reported that their school or trust have two or more vacancies on their governing board, an increase of five percentage points from last year and an increase of seven percentage points from 2016. Roughly three in five governance volunteers are women, this has been a similar result every year since they began asking this question.

In Manchester, we are back down to pre-pandemic levels for LA Governor vacancies but have seen an increase in the number of co-opted vacancies being registered with the School Governance Unit, with 7 governing bodies having 2 co-opted vacancies. Manchester has a similar ratio to the NGA survey with respect to more volunteer applicants being female.

2.8 In a recent survey in which 118 governors responded from across the City, the following results were collected:

Question	Response
Do you feel your governing body is representative of the community it serves?	Yes - 70% No - 30%
Do you feel your governing body has a range/balance of voices (from both within and outside your community)?	Yes - 79% No - 21%
Do you struggle to get Parent Governors to put themselves forwards for election?	Yes - 40% No - 60%

2.9 When asked who was missing from our governing bodies the top five responses were:

- Governors with disabilities
- Governors from a range of black and minority ethnic groups
- Governors from a range of sexual orientations
- Young Governors (under the age of 40)
- Governors with a range of religious beliefs

2.10 When respondents were asked to tick all the routes they used to recruit governors the most popular response was, by asking for recommendations from people they knew. The second two routes were using a national governor recruitment agency and asking the Council School Governance Unit for assistance.

2.11 Governors felt that the Council could support governor recruitment by continuing to offer support with governor recruitment, produce videos of governors talking about the role and governing body meetings to help people understand the role more.

2.12 In summary, looking at the data and the results of the governor survey we are starting to attract a diverse range of governor applications to fill Local Authority governor positions and 79% of governing bodies feel that they have a diverse range of voices on their boards. However, when governors were asked who was missing on their boards, governors did feel there was still work to do to increase diversity even further. In addition, governing boards have said that the most popular way to recruit governors is through recommendations from people known to the board. This recruitment process does not always lead to a diverse range of voices around the table especially from outside the school community.

The Department for Education (DfE) outline the importance of seeking governors from outside the school community in the [DfE Governance Handbook](#):

“Boards should welcome and thrive on having a sufficiently diverse range of individuals, viewpoints and/or experiences, since open debate leads to good decisions in the interests of the whole school/trust community.

Boards must ensure they understand the full diversity of the cultural and religious context of the school and the community it serves.

Having some people on the board who have no close ties with the school, or who come from outside the faith or ethnic group of the majority of pupils, can help ensure that the board has sufficient internal challenge to the decisions it makes and how it carries out its strategic functions.”

The School Governance Unit will be supporting governing bodies by reaching out to a range of diverse community groups and undertaking targeted internal reach out to Council staff through for example, staff groups and leadership programmes. However, ultimately it is for Governing bodies themselves to consider how they recruit a governing body that best represents the community they serve and includes governors with a balance of skills. The Local Authority only appoints Local Authority governors which in some schools may only be 1 governor. The conversation will also continue through our Chairs’ Briefings and themed governor events, as outlined in section 3 to explore new ways to recruit governors to maintain effective governance through building diverse governing bodies.

3.0 Governor Support and Resources

3.1 Chairs’ Briefings

Attendance at Chairs Briefings maintains good engagement from our schools and Multi-Academy Trusts. Topics explored last year in 2021-2022 included: Covid updates, exclusions guidance for governors, safeguarding, Ofsted preparation, governor well-being and the Education White Paper. The Autumn Term 2022 meeting included: educational outcomes 2022, further updates about the White Paper, including a discussion about possible expectations for Multi-Academy Trusts in the City and a Finance update. Future Chairs Briefings in 2023 will continue the conversations about the White Paper, Climate Action Plans, Diversity in Governance and monitoring attendance and behaviour.

Academic Year 2020 – 2021

- Average of 72 governors at each termly meeting
- 63% of schools and academies represented
- 50% of Multi-Academy Trusts represented

Academic Year 2021 – 2022

- Average of 51 governors at each termly meeting
- 50% of schools and academies represented
- 56% of Multi-Academy Trusts represented

Autumn Term 2022

- 42 governors attended
- 24% of schools and academies represented

- 30% of Multi-Academy Trusts represented

3.2 Themed Events for Governors

In 2021-2022, we started to trial themed events for governors offering both face to face and virtual approaches. Attendance is starting to build at these sessions and the number of schools represented at meetings was 22% and 24% of Multi-Academy Trusts in the academic year 2021-2022.

All the themed events received positive feedback, with the chance to share and discuss with other governors being the most important aspect.

We will continue to promote and consult governors about these sessions to maximise attendance, whilst also acknowledging that governors are volunteers who do already provide a large amount of time to the role.

Events 2021-2022

- Autumn 2021 we ran a safeguarding and exclusions themed face to face 'Gov Meet' which was attended by 11 governors. Governors examined scenarios and shared best practice.
- The theme for the Spring Term 2022 was Whole School Approaches to Creating a Sustainable Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) Strategy and was attended by 22 governors. The virtual session was organised in partnership with the Bright Futures Teaching School Hub and delivered by Diverse Educators. The session examined the agenda within the curriculum, pastoral care, staffing, school environment and policies.
- A face to face session for governors was held at part of the Bee Green Education Summit in Summer Term 2022 and attended by 18 governors. Two governing bodies shared the work of their school's climate action plans and governors were provided with: an overview of ways to reduce school's carbon footprints, the DfE Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy for Education and questions to challenge their schools around the agenda.

Events 2022-2023

- In Autumn Term 2022 we held a virtual Diversity in Governance session, which was attended by 11 governors. The session explored the case for diverse governance, explored the research undertaken by the [National Governance Association Increasing Participation in School and Trust Governance 2021](#) and discussed new ways to reach out and recruit a more diverse range of governors.
- Further themed events for governors are being planned around: safeguarding, handling school complaints and climate action plans.

3.3 Chairs Development Programme

The Council has funded a Chairs Development Programme which is being delivered in partnership with the National Governance Association (NGA). There are 27 new, experienced and aspiring chairs taking part in the programme which commenced in November 2022 and runs through to June 2023. The programme includes: 3 virtual sessions, a face to face session, access to the NGA online learning materials and the opportunity to peer observe each others board meetings. Participants also have the option to have a mentor session and 360 degree appraisal at an extra cost to be met by their schools.

3.4 Clerks Meeting

In the Autumn Term 2022, the School Governance Unit held a meeting for clerks who operate in the City, 9 clerks attended. The session examined the role of the clerk in effective governance and explored the School Governance Unit resources to support effective governance. Feedback was very positive and clerks have requested another session in the Summer.

3.5 Resources for Governors on the Schoolshub Website

The [Schoolshub Website](#) is a password protected website available to school leaders and governors in Manchester. There is a range of information on the website for governors including the Manchester Governors' Handbook which signpost governors by theme to local and national information. New resources have been developed and posted on the Schoolshub Website this year including:

- Joining a Strong Trust
- Effective Governance
- Ofsted Guidance for Governors
- Induction Guidance and Framework for Governor Development

The School Governance Unit also provides regular email updates to chairs, clerks and LA governors for dissemination to all governors in Manchester.

4.0 School Quality Assurance

4.1 The Council offers all schools and academies in Manchester, an annual Quality Assurance Report which is undertaken by an external quality assurance professional. The report is a useful tool for governors providing an external view of their school's progress. Governors are invited to attend the meeting to discuss the report with the head teacher and the external professional. This year governors were asked to reflect on how they monitor the impact of the curriculum on outcomes for pupils and the school's policies and practices and the impact they have on behaviour and attendance.

Reports are currently being analysed to identify any areas/ themes that could be covered as part of Chairs' Briefings and/ or further resources to support governors.

- 4.2 Where challenges are identified through the Quality Assurance process which highlight a school would benefit from support, the head teacher and Chair of Governors/CEO of the Trust are invited to attend a Support and Challenge Board with the Director of Education. The purpose of this meeting is to explore any concerns in detail, review progress towards action plans for improvement and any additional support that may be required.

Examples of support provided to governing bodies in response to schools identified through the Quality Assurance process includes:

- Advice, support and bespoke training sessions for the chair/governing body from the School Governance Lead and/ or the Senior School Quality Assurance Council Officers
- Assisting with sourcing governors to strengthen the governing body
- The offer of additional funding to undertake an external review of governance, develop an action plan and a programme of training for the governing body

- 4.3 In the last academic year 2021-2022, the school governance unit supported 3 governing bodies and funded 3 external reviews of governance. The process was welcomed by the governing bodies and has assisted them to develop action plans for development and strengthen their membership. One of the schools supported received a positive comment from Ofsted about the support provided: *“Training from the local authority has improved governors’ ability to hold you and other leaders to account, for example, through appropriate questions”*

So far this academic year 2022-2023, one governing body has been provided with funding for an external review of governance and one governing body has been provided with a training session to support their development. Additional schools will be identified for support in 2023, through the analysis of the Quality Assurance Reports.

- 4.4 The Department of Education (DfE) also allows Local Authorities to refer schools for a funded external review of governance where the school has a ‘requires improvement’ Ofsted judgement with ‘requires improvement’ for ‘leadership and management’. We referred one school in April 2022 to receive a DfE funded external review of governance to support their development and they are currently working through their action plan to develop their effectiveness.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 There will undoubtedly continue to be further challenges for governors to navigate through in the future, particularly in relation to financial pressures and making decisions with respect to the implementation of the Government’s Schools White Paper. It is clear however, that we have a dedicated group of volunteers in the City who embrace these challenges, keeping our children

and young people, along with the 'family of schools' approach at their core to support our schools.

- 5.2 The Council remains committed to supporting governing bodies and Multi-Academy Trusts to recruit a diverse range of governors. We will be developing more videos and reaching out to a range of communities and businesses to promote governance.
- 5.3 We will continue to offer virtual and face to face Chairs' Briefings and themed governor events to provide governors with the chance to network and remain updated about local and national developments.
- 5.4 Priorities for the School Governance Strategy in the City over the next 12 months will include:
 - Continued support with governor recruitment for schools and academies in Manchester
 - Development of further videos for use by schools and academies to promote governance in Manchester
 - Engagement with a diverse range of communities and businesses to promote governance
 - Continued challenge to governing bodies to review the diversity of their membership, their approaches to governor recruitment and how they provide induction and assistance to new governors.
 - Continued focus on the role of governors in carbon reduction and school climate action plans
 - Continued governance support and challenge to schools identified through the School Quality Assurance Process
 - 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 management of the school