

# GOVERNOR HEADLINES

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*Governor Headlines is a regular newsletter produced by Suffolk County Council's Governor Services team to support you in your role as governors and keep you informed of the latest updates.*

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Welcome to issue #41 of Governor Headlines for January/February 2021. The governance team are working to support you by sharing information and practice between governors in different schools which we hope you will find useful. With this in mind, chairs of governors from two of our schools (Sandlings and Boxford Primary schools) presented in Governor Headlines Live in January. In this edition, the chair of St Botolph's Primary School has shared how they used two surveys to understand more how parents and staff were feeling in the context of Covid-19, which helped inform governors on how best to support them.

The importance of having a strategic vision for the school runs through much of the information in this issue and is strongly connected to the topics of Inclusion, succession planning, Headteacher recruitment and consideration of partnership working or federation, all of which are included below. We hope you find the contents useful.

As always, thank you for your continued support to school leaders, and the school community in this particularly difficult time.

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## Is Inclusion Part of Your School's Vision?

### **IMPORTANCE: USEFUL TO KNOW**

### **WHO IT'S FOR: ALL SCHOOLS**

The first function of governance is 'Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction' within the school. Governors play a vital role in working with school leaders, establishing, reviewing and fulfilling the vision for their schools.

- What is your school's vision?
- Is the whole school community aware of it?
- How is your vision reflected in the work of the school?

These are helpful questions for governing bodies to ask themselves frequently.

So what is a vision? A vision statement is a clear, definitive statement of what we want to accomplish and what we aspire to in the future. In terms of your school, knowing where your school is going with an ambitious goal brings purpose, clarity and direction. In addition, the vision should harness the core values and beliefs of the school, share them and model them in a succinct and clear way.

Your vision may well refer to each and every pupil or student in your school. It may also refer to preparing your pupils and students for life beyond your school and may reflect the needs of your school community. A vision should emphasise the impact the school will have on all pupils within the school. In doing so it will be inclusive and reflect a commitment to leave no child behind. All schools serve communities which are diverse and will have pupils or students who are vulnerable. A major part of developing a shared inclusive vision involves understanding clearly the needs of the children in your school community including their vulnerabilities and how to overcome them and forging a school culture that values each and every one. It will be a culture that fosters diverse and flexible learning opportunities for all students to thrive.

The OFSTED framework is explicit in its expectations around inclusion. In both your self-evaluation and conversations with inspectors, you will be evaluating how well your school promotes 'an inclusive environment'. Therefore, do consider, does your school vision focus on all the children in the school community? Are you confident the vision is being achieved? Or where are you on your journey to achieve it?

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## The Suffolk Local Authority Guidance on Forming Federations

**IMPORTANCE: USEFUL TO KNOW**  
**WHO IT'S FOR: MAINTAINED SCHOOLS**

In your role as governors, you will be setting the strategic direction for the school. One of the things you may be considering for the future of the school are the benefits that can be gained from forming a partnership that may lead to a formal federation with another school or schools.

The [Suffolk Local Authority Guidance on Forming a Federation](#) aims to provide direct support to school governing bodies looking to federate and will support you in the due diligence process of federating. It will also provide support for governors to ensure the decisions made have the best potential to secure sustainability in terms of pupil numbers and school improvement.

You can learn more about this guidance by listening back to our latest Governor Headlines Live recording, however if you have any specific queries regarding partnerships or federations please contact us at [governance@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:governance@suffolk.gov.uk) .

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## Succession Planning for School Leaders

**IMPORTANCE: USEFUL TO KNOW**  
**WHO IT'S FOR: MAINTAINED SCHOOLS**

Recruiting new Headteachers is one of the most important jobs that governors carry out. The appointment of a Headteacher to a school will have an impact on the educational experience of the children that attend it.

Headteachers and governors can contribute to the development of leaders who may want to consider moving towards headship.

The Local Authority have been supporting this by facilitating a coaching programme for senior leaders in schools. This encourages leaders to reflect on their professional development, whether headship might be a direction they would choose to take and what they might need to help them prepare to be effective Headteachers. In addition, there has also been a training opportunity for Headteachers to train as coaches, so that they can also support leaders in schools on potentially taking this step.

As governors, forward thinking about the strategic direction of the school, linked to consideration and encouragement for the professional development journey for all

staff, will help to support succession planning aimed at there being high quality leadership in schools. The ultimate aim for this of course, being for all pupils in Suffolk schools to experience the best possible education as an impact of strong leadership.

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## Headteacher Recruitment

**IMPORTANCE: USEFUL TO KNOW**

**WHO IT'S FOR: ALL SCHOOLS**

As stated in the section above, this is potentially one of the most important activities a governing body undertakes, reflecting the significant impact a Headteacher has on the school pupils, staff and community.

### Recruiting a Headteacher – LA Maintained Schools

If you are an LA Maintained School looking to recruit a new Headteacher, please call Emma Eynon, Project Manager for Headteacher recruitment, on 01473 263943 or email [Headships@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Headships@suffolk.gov.uk).

Our Officers will be able to support you with this important work. This also applies to any other changes to a Headship position, for example if your Headteacher is absent long term from school due to illness or is wishing to change their existing contract arrangements.

### Recruiting a Headteacher – Academies

The Headteacher Project manager can also advise academies with a range of options to support in the recruitment of a new Headteacher. For further information, contact Emma Eynon, Project on 01473 263943 or email [headships@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:headships@suffolk.gov.uk)

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## Effective Governor Communication with Parents and Staff

**IMPORTANCE: USEFUL TO KNOW**

**WHO IT'S FOR: ALL SCHOOLS**

Strong communication between governing bodies, staff and parents is a key part of an effective school and can help provide you, as governors, with a better understanding of key priorities.

The governing body of St Botolph's CEVC Primary School were concerned about the wellbeing of their staff, children and parents in the context of Covid-19. Chair of Governors, Susan Wright, has shared the following article detailing two surveys that

were carried out with parents and staff in order to ensure governors' effective support of the school.

"When the Coronavirus pandemic closed our school in the spring of 2020, we faced a rapidly changing scenario that required an equally swift response. In that environment the decision was made to form a Coronavirus sub-committee to meet the changing and challenging circumstances. This committee met remotely throughout the summer term; was paused in the autumn and reconvened in January 2021.

The committee is made up of five governors and the head teacher. Amongst whom are the safeguarding Governor, two Governors representing Personnel, Curriculum and Finance committees, a parent Governor and myself.

The impetus for the surveys was our concern for the well-being of staff, children and parents. Our objective was to give everyone the opportunity to have a voice. We wanted to understand what we were doing well; what we could improve and gather any key pointers to help maintain pupil engagement going forward.

Two of the governors formulated both surveys within a tight timeframe. The proposals were circulated to the committee for approval and a framework for feedback was established.

Both the surveys and the covering communications were sent to the recipients by email. Upon completion and return, the data was analysed and circulated to the committee who met shortly after to discuss the feedback and decide how to respond. Follow up letters were drafted, agreed and sent to all parents and staff thanking them for their engagement and providing feedback on all key issues raised.

The major challenge was to keep focused on the key objectives with a short time frame.

As a group we were able to exploit expertise at hand with a rapid turnaround of production, collaboration and feedback. The success of our surveys to my mind is down to asking pertinent questions via an easily accessible format. We are however very lucky in having two very talented people who have extensive experience in gathering and analysing information this way. Their expertise enabled the process.

For information, our timeline was:

- 20/01/21 decision to instigate surveys
- 22/01/21 questions agreed
- 22/01/21 covering letter and survey sent electronically with deadline of 27/01/21 to all staff
- 25/01/21 covering letter and survey sent electronically to all parents with deadline of 29/01/21
- 01/02/21 reports prepared and circulated to the group and the Full Governing Body
- 03/02/21 committee met to discuss feedback and response

- 05/02/21 letter sent from the Chair of Governors to all staff and parents and copied to all the Governing Body.
- 08/02/21 Full Governing Body met remotely to discuss the feedback received from both surveys.”

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## Parental Complaints

### **IMPORTANCE: USEFUL TO KNOW**

### **WHO IT'S FOR: MAINTAINED SCHOOLS**

Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint about any aspect of school life including for example, the behaviour of children, staff or discourteous parking.

If you receive a complaint it is important that you are familiar with your own complaints procedure and as governors you ensure that the school leaders are following it.. We can support you if you need advice on any aspect of this. We can also assist you in appointing investigators, if applicable.

The Local Authority no longer provides a model policy. In 2019 the DfE published guidance on complaints and added a model policy for schools to use if they wish. This can be found [here](#). If you are still using a Suffolk LA policy, then you must review it against the updated DfE guidance. If you would like support or wish to discuss it further, please get in contact.

See below for some top tips on what to do and not do if you receive a complaint.

### **Don't discuss complaints with complainants yourself.**

If a parent approaches you with a complaint about the school, do not try and address it there and then. Direct them to your school's complaints policy. As a governor, you need to avoid discussions with individuals about school management issues.

### **Do...**

There will be different policies for staff and parental complaints, now is a good time to check they are up to date. The Department for Education (DfE) published a policy for schools to adopt if they wish.

### **Don't deviate from your policies.**

Always check your own policies before taking any action to respond to a complaint and follow them to the letter. The DfE will review complaints if requested by parents but this will be a review of whether the complaint was dealt with in line with your policy. They will not review the body of the complaint.

### **Do ...**

Be objective and non-adversarial. It is important that the complaint is given due consideration. There may be legitimate improvements that can be made following the response. It can be daunting to make a complaint to the school, so it is likely that the complainant feels that they have just cause.

**Don't post anything on social media.**

You might see the complaint being discussed on social media – especially if you are a parent governor and are on Facebook or in WhatsApp groups with other parents. It is not advisable to get involved with this as it could make things worse and is likely to go against your school's complaints policy. We would also advise not to make a comment to the press without thoroughly checking first.

**Do...**

As a preventative measure, make sure your school has a social media policy or set of guidelines in place that cover how you will respond to a situation like this. Agree this as a governing board and make sure everyone is on the same page.

If your school is still a maintained school and you are contacted by the press Suffolk County Council's press office are available to advise you.

**Don't involve others too quickly.**

Take time to reflect upon the complaint and who may need to be involved in the issue. Whilst you may want to share with governor colleagues including the Headteacher, take time to think about who needs to be involved to move this forward in a fair and objective way. Take advice from others outside of the organisation including HR if appropriate. If you share the details prematurely with individuals who may be involved in the complaint you could, unintentionally, be making it difficult to undertake a fair investigation.

**Do...**

Ensure that the agreed governor has full responsibility for the complaint. They can share with the Headteacher and governors that there has been a complaint, but **all** details of the complaint and complainant should remain confidential. The Chair of Governors is likely to be the default contact for governors. Once the Chair has been involved, they cannot form part of the process later. Do they have skills you may wish to use for any potential hearing? If so, is there someone who can be the initial contact? How will this be communicated to the school and the wider community?

**Don't share information freely.**

If you are not sure someone needs information about the complaint, don't share it. It might add to data protection worries on top of dealing with the initial complaint. Sometimes the information is sensitive, and it will usually involve someone's personal data.

**Do...**

Only use approved communication channels. For example, if your board uses GovernorHub for documents relating to the complaint, always use this and do not

attach information to emails or send text messages about the matter. Ensure that GovernorHub is up to date and that the permissions are set so that only the appropriate governors, if any, have access to this information. Ensure you have a personal school email address and use this for any governance work.

Do you have any experience about dealing with complaints that you would like to share? If you do, please get in touch with our Leadership and Governance team at [governance@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:governance@suffolk.gov.uk) or 01473 263972.

### Action

Check that your school is using the Department of Education's model complaints policy. If not, review your policy against the DfE's guidance.

## Are you Looking to Develop EdTech, Blended Learning and Computing in your School this Year?

### **IMPORTANCE: USEFUL TO KNOW WHO IT'S FOR: ALL SCHOOLS**

*Does your school have a platform that allows them to deliver lessons remotely? Are they able to assess and feedback to students using a variety of technologies? Has your school developed a plan for potential use of blended learning for use at home or in the classroom over the next year? Are your staff confident with the use of technology in the classroom?*

Based at West Suffolk College, we are one of the lead schools for the DfE's EdTech demonstrator programme - a national project, looking to support schools with their approach to remote delivery and blended learning. We can support your school with FREE training and bespoke mentoring to develop a model that suits the needs of your staff and pupils.

To find out more, please visit our website: <https://www.wsc.ac.uk/about-the-college/edtech-demonstrator>

*Did you know that only half of secondary schools offer Computer Science at GCSE? Are you looking to offer Computer Science at GCSE but need trained staff to do so? Are you wanting to support the confidence of your staff to deliver the new Primary Computing Curriculum?*

The Suffolk Teach Computing Hub delivers Computer Science training for staff at both Primary and Secondary level. We offer the Computer Science Accelerator Programme which will train non-specialist staff to GCSE standard – This is a FREE, bursary supported programme that will increase the confidence of staff to deliver this exciting subject. Our Primary and Secondary courses are bursary supported and can be delivered at a range of times to support the school, leading to both Primary and Secondary Computing Certification. Alongside our courses, we also have fully editable schemes of work with resources and assessments that spans KS1-KS4. We also have Computing Specialists that will support the school with mentoring and bursary funding to implement GCSE computer Science. To find out more, visit our website: <https://www.wsc.ac.uk/schools/6643-suffolk-computer-hub>

For more information or enquiries about how we can support your school, please email: [computerhub@wsc.ac.uk](mailto:computerhub@wsc.ac.uk)

## Suffolk County Council Funded School Travel for 2021/2022

### **IMPORTANCE: USEFUL TO KNOW**

### **WHO IT'S FOR: ALL SCHOOLS, SPECIAL SCHOOLS, PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS, COLLEGES AND SIXTH FORMS**

Information on the opt in process for Suffolk County Council (SCC) funded school travel 2021/22 for eligible children was sent to school leaders via Suffolk Headlines this week. For your information, suggestions for school leaders on how to share this message are below.

Parents will be able to opt in for SCC funded school travel for the 2021/2022 school year from the 1 March 2021. If their child is eligible, they must opt in by the 31 May 2021 to ensure they transport is in place for the start of the Autumn term.

SCC asks schools to help us make sure parents are aware of the funded school travel policy and what this means for their child or children. We also ask schools to help us ensure parents opt-in for SCC funded travel.

The information below helps to explain the School Travel Policy and is also to help school leaders share this information with parents:

- 1) [Schools guide to SCC funded school travel policy 2021](#)
- 2) [Message to parents](#)
- 3) [Poster](#)
- 4) [Social Media Graphic](#)

What school leaders can do to help:

- 1) Share the parent message with parents at your schools via parent mail etc.
- 2) Put the parent message on your website
- 3) Use social media to share message with parents
- 4) Twitter: Retweet @Suffolkcc's messages relating SCC funded school travel

- 5) Facebook: Share Suffolk County Council's messages relating to SCC funded school travel
- 6) Put up posters
- 7) Share parent message in any newsletters or publications

Further information can also be found at <https://www.suffolkonboard.com/school-travel>.

## **CORE GOVERNANCE INFORMATION**

### **The Knowledge**

Please find the latest edition of **The Knowledge** for February 2021 [here](#).



### **Governor Headlines Live**

**IMPORTANCE: USEFUL TO KNOW**

**WHO IT'S FOR: ALL SCHOOLS**

Our third Governor Headlines Live session took place on the 27 January 2021 and we were pleased that so many of you could join us.

If you were unable to attend Governor Headlines Live, a recording of the session is now available to watch and can be found [here](#).

The session covered:

**An invitation to ask questions linked to managing Covid in schools**

**Information about NQTs and the Appropriate Body**

**An overview of the Local Authority's 'Guide to forming a Federation'**

**Examples of how strategic vision is central to the work of two Suffolk schools**

**An update on Governor Training.**

The Statutory Induction Guidance referred to in the NQT section can be found [here](#). Please be aware however that this guidance will be updated later this term. Responsibilities specific to governors can be found on page 33.

## Save the Date:

Please note: our next Governor Headlines Live session will take place on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> May, not Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> April as previously stated. Invites and agenda to follow.



### Did you know?

You must publish information on the governing body in line with the constitution of [governing bodies of maintained schools statutory guidance](#). This should include an attendance record at governing body and committee meetings over the last academic year.

## TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

### Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (RSHE) Governor Training

**IMPORTANCE: USEFUL TO KNOW**

**WHO IT'S FOR: ALL SCHOOLS**

Public Health Suffolk are offering a final training session in conjunction with Schools' Choice for any governors and trustees who would like to gain an understanding of the new statutory RSHE guidance and what this means for schools before teaching must begin at the start of the Summer Term.

These sessions will cover the following key points of the guidance and how governors and trustees can support their settings in implementing the guidance effectively. The sessions will be run virtually via Microsoft Teams.

- The key points of the statutory guidance
- How sex education fits in
- The importance of PSHE education
- Next steps and school responsibilities (inc. parent consultation)
- The relevance of equality and diversity
- Policy requirements
- Ofsted inspection
- The picture across Suffolk
- The Governors' role

- The Schools RSHE Portal

**Suitable for:** Governors or trustees with responsibility for monitoring RSHE in their school or trust plus any interested governor or trustee

**Competency link:** Strategic leadership, Accountability, Compliance

The final session being offered is:

**Wednesday 10th March 2021 6.00pm – 8.00pm**

The session is free to all Schools' Choice training subscribers. Booking is via GovernorHub, or by emailing [governor.training@schoolschoice.org](mailto:governor.training@schoolschoice.org)

If you have any queries about the course, please contact Jane Stannard at [Jane.stannard@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Jane.stannard@suffolk.gov.uk) or 01473 263296/ 07704018368.

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## Safer Recruitment Training

Safer Recruitment training courses can be found on the Schools' Choice CPD webpage by searching for training with 'safer recruitment' as your keywords.

Training is being run virtually and places are limited. The next two training sessions being offered are taking place on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

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If you have any thoughts or suggestions regarding Governor Headlines, please contact [governorheadlines@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:governorheadlines@suffolk.gov.uk) .