

# GOVERNOR HEADLINES

*Governor Headlines is a regular newsletter produced by Suffolk County Council's Governor Services team, part of the wider Education, Skills and Learning Team. It aims to support you in your role as governors and keep you informed of the latest updates.*

Welcome to issue #42 of Governor Headlines for April/May 2021. We hope this issue finds you well and that it is both interesting and helpful to you in carrying out your roles as governors. The last edition of Governor Headlines included a thread of the importance of strategic vision running through many of the sections. We continue to emphasise the importance of school leaders' vision for their school in this issue too, linked to decision making and the aim for Suffolk schools to provide the highest quality of education for all Suffolk children and young people, today and for their futures.

This term's Governor Headlines Live will be taking place on Wednesday 12 May. We always very much enjoy these sessions and do hope you will be able to join us. It is always good to see you on the call.

More details to follow!



Our continued thanks for your support to school leaders, and the school communities with whom you work.

## **Message from Adrian Orr**

**Assistant Director Education & Learning**



As a busy summer term gets well underway, I have been heartened by the great work of school leaders, governors and staff teams in their strong focus on moving education forward in times that remain far from usual.

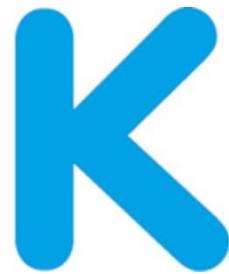
The pandemic is still a reality and although the direction of travel of the national roadmap appears to be advancing positively, I remain deeply grateful for the work of school leaders, governors and staff in keeping children and adults safe through their careful planning, commitment, and vigilance.

It is a tough time to be a school leader or staff member and the remarkable way in which the school sector continues to pull together is a credit to the professionalism of staff across the education system in the county. As governors, your support remains a vital component in the Suffolk response to COVID-19. I have regular opportunities to thank school leaders and their staff for the great work they are doing for the children and young people. I want to take this opportunity to again pay tribute to your work as governors in schools and settings of all types. Your work in providing support and critical friend perspectives on all aspects of school life is appreciated and valued.

The role of governors is an essential element in not only managing the impact of the pandemic on schools, but most importantly in supporting the ongoing vision of the schools you serve. Vision is a theme in this edition of Governor Headlines, and I hope you all feel a real sense of pride and achievement for the support you have provided through your work. I wish you all a successful term and hope you find this latest edition of Governor Headlines a valuable resource.

# The Knowledge

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



## How Often do you Evaluate the Effectiveness of your Governing Body?

**IMPORTANCE: USEFUL TO KNOW**

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



The Department for Education's Governance Handbook states that a governor's duty is to "drive relentless ambition for the young people served by our school's system, whatever the circumstances". The governing board has an accountability for school improvement and the educational experience and wellbeing of every child.

The three strategic functions of the Governing Board are to:

- Ensure the clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.
- Hold the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils.
- Oversee the financial performance of the school and make sure its money is well spent.

Although self-review should happen at least once a year, it is good practice to build in reflection and review as a continuous process. Talking through the impact of your work as governors relating to each of the three core functions can help with this process.

### **Ensuring the clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction**

Although this year has been very challenging, the School Development Plan (SDP) remains central to school recovery and ultimately to school improvement. Governors will continuously be considering how well the work reflected in the SDP is contributing to the school's journey to achieve its vision.

Suggested questions to consider are;

- How well has the school moved towards achieving its vision?
- How do you know?
- What are the next steps which will be included in the SDP?

Progress towards the school recovery and pace of improvement benefits when all staff are engaged with and understand the vision. Governors may consider how they know that the vision is embedded throughout the school.

School vision was discussed in edition #41 of Governor Headlines and developing and demonstrating a school vision was also discussed at the last Governor Headlines live event which can be listened back to [here](#). If your Governing Board would like support with work around the vision do talk with your Standards and Excellence Officer or get in touch with the Governor Services Team.

### **Holding the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils**

We recognise that Headteachers, senior leaders and staff across the county have gone, and continue to go, the extra mile to support young people in their care. In carrying out their role's governors have rightly prioritised support for school leaders with their wellbeing, the wellbeing of staff, children and the wider community during the response to Covid.

In reviewing the impact of governors' work on the educational performance of the school it may be helpful to discuss both governors' understanding and confidence in carrying out what is required. Some of the questions in The National Governance Association's [Skills Audit](#) and the Key for School Governors can support with this. An example from the NGA Skills Audit would be:

'I am confident I know enough to ask questions and challenge leaders on matters relating to educational outcomes.'

What is monitoring and evaluation showing about progress towards SDP priorities and towards achieving the school's vision?

Other suggested questions for governors to consider are:

- How well are governors' skills being used?
- Do governors know how learning and progress is being evaluated?
- How well do governors understand their roles as described in the [Governance Structures and Roles](#)
- Have governors undertaken the appropriate training to address the outcomes above?
- Is the Governing Board currently looking to recruit? What skills are being sought to add to and complement the existing skills in the governing body? Where will you advertise? Have you considered the advantages of diversifying your board?
- How is governance delegated? How well do the committee structures work?

- Using the [\*\*Education Inspection Framework\*\*](#) provided by Ofsted, how will governors demonstrate their knowledge and impact?

### **Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.**

A key focus for governors is ensuring that budget plans are in line with established strategic direction and clearly linked to school improvement priorities and rigorous self-evaluation.

The DfE published updated [\*\*SFVS guidance\*\*](#) on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021. This guidance gives governors the tools and questions to ask about financial acuity and impact. It is recommended to use the [\*\*schools financial benchmarking\*\*](#) tool to compare spend against similar sized organisations.

Self-evaluation of governance is important. The NGA recommend a 360 review of the clerk and of the Chair of Governors. This may have cost implications on top of NGA membership. In addition, the DfE can provide a [\*\*Facilitated Review of Governance\*\*](#). There may also be a cost involved in this. Clear governor development will ultimately reflect in the experiences of the children.

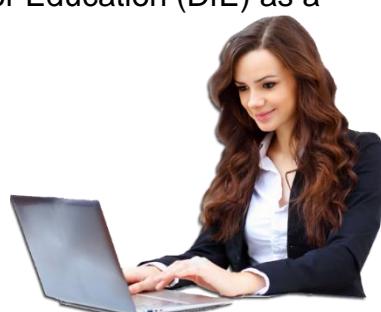
If you are interested in support for self-evaluation, finding out more about a review of governance or in speaking to school leaders who have been through the process, do ask your Standards and Excellence Officer, Lead Standards and Excellence Officer, or contact the Governance Services Team directly.

### **Why is it not appropriate to ask a member of the office staff to write the minutes?**

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

Professional clerking is recognised by the Department for Education (DfE) as a critical component of effective governance.

“Professional-quality clerking is about much more than taking minutes to record the discussions and decisions of the board. It is also about providing governing boards with expert advice on governance, procedures and compliance and directly contributing to its efficient conduct. The voluntary nature of governance makes it all the more important that boards conduct their business efficiently to make the best possible use of everyone’s time.” (DfE Clerking Competency Framework, 2017)



It is highly probable that if a member of office staff “clerks” your meetings it is infinitely cheaper than hiring a professional clerk, primarily as they may be performing this role in addition to their own. However, the fundamental question about the appropriateness of this arrangement is “does the clerk have experience of procedural, compliance and quality governance?” The DfE document explains that “Professional clerks to governing boards should carry out their duties in line with the seven principles of public life (Nolan principles). They should also be mindful of their responsibilities under equality legislation, recognising and encouraging diversity and inclusion, and should understand the impact of effective governance on the quality of education and on outcomes for all children and young people.”

The Clerking Competency Framework has been specifically designed to assist Clerks and their governing bodies to understand the diverse role of the clerk and to be able to identify individuals with the right skills.

But what about cost implications? Professional clerking will entail a cost. However, the more effective the governing body is in achieving its three-core functions, the greater the impact will be on the effectiveness of leadership in improving outcomes for children and young people within the school.

Where can I find a clerk? You can pay for a clerking service, where the provider will send a suitably qualified clerk to your meetings. In Suffolk, Schools’ Choice are the main provider for this. There are also other services available. The advantage of this arrangement is that holidays booked by your regular clerk will be covered, likewise with absence caused by sickness.

The NGA provides a list of local professional clerks as a starting point or the school can advertise or use social media sites such as LinkedIn.

### Did you know?

The Department for Education’s guidance on [What Maintained Schools Should Publish Online](#) and [What Academies, Free Schools and Colleges Should Publish Online](#) were updated in February 2021.

## A Governor's Strategic Role in Wellbeing

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

The National Governance Association (NGA) Governance Handbook states “Boards should have due regard for the wellbeing and mental health of the school leadership team and teaching staff more broadly”.

The wellbeing of Headteachers, senior leaders and school staff throughout the Covid-19 pandemic has been an important focus and your support continues to be vital to the successful navigation of this significant period of upheaval. However, regard for wellbeing and mental health should not be confined to an association with Covid-19 but integrated into the culture and ethos of your school.

As governors your role is a strategic one. So how do you ensure that substantial steps are taken to ensure the wellbeing of school staff, without being operational?

Here are some suggested themes to consider.

1. The whole school vision.  
Are mental health and wellbeing built into the vision and the SDP?  
What would good mental health and well-being look like and how will you know if it is being achieved?
  2. Governor roles.  
All governors should have a regard for wellbeing and its implications for staff and pupils. If it is appropriate, you could speak to your Headteacher about common concerns staff may have expressed to them regarding wellbeing. The NGA Governance Handbook also recommends boards designate “a governor or academy trustee as a wellbeing champion to provide strategic support to the school leadership team as appropriate”. Governors for Schools are currently running a campaign called Wellbeing Governor and further information about the wellbeing governor role can be found [here](#).
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## Statutory Induction for Early Career Teachers from September 2021

### **IMPORTANCE: STATUTORY**

### **WHO IT'S FOR: ALL GOVERNORS IN SCHOOLS AND SETTINGS EMPLOYING EARLY CAREER TEACHERS FROM SEPTEMBER 2021**

From September 2021 qualified teachers beginning their statutory induction will be known as Early Career Teachers (ECTs). They will undertake a two-year statutory induction period instead of one which is the current practice.

In-school support will change with the expectation that each ECT will have an induction tutor and a mentor to work with them. In exceptional circumstances this can be the same person provided they understand the distinct nature of each role and have sufficient time available to them to fulfil both roles.

From September 2021 schools are expected to embed the Early Career Framework (ECF) into their induction programme. There are three approaches available to schools. Each has implications for planning, quality assurance and fidelity checks. An early decision about a school's chosen route is important to allow for any necessary planning and fidelity checks before induction begins in September.

The three approaches:

- A provider led programme which Teaching School Hubs will share more information about. This is funded and accredited by the DfE and will not involve participating schools in any extra planning. It is referred to as a Full Induction Programme (FIP). A quality assurance programme will be determined by the DfE.
- Schools can deliver their own training, called a Core Induction Programme (CIP), using readily available DfE accredited material and resources quality assured by the Education Endowment Foundation.
- Schools can design and deliver their own two-year induction programme based on the ECF.

The DfE has stated that schools delivering their induction through the Core Induction Programme route or designing and delivering their own schedule using the Early Career Framework, must have additional quality assurance checks. This is to safeguard the ECTs' entitlement to an ECF based induction. These fidelity checks will be carried out by the appropriate body before induction begins and throughout the two-year programme.

The updated statutory guidance which comes into force on 1 September 2021 is available here: [Induction for Early career teachers \(England\) March 2021](#)

Page 7 provides a helpful summary of the main changes.

Pages 39-40 outline the roles and responsibilities of governors.

If you have any queries, please contact Celia Moore at [Celia.moore@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Celia.moore@suffolk.gov.uk) or [EL.NQTenquiries@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:EL.NQTenquiries@suffolk.gov.uk).

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## Admission Arrangements for the 2022/2023 School Year

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

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

The admission arrangements to all mainstream schools in Suffolk for the 2022/2023 school year are now available on the county council's website, [\*\*Admissions to schools in Suffolk for the 2022/2023 school year.\*\*](#)

Any objections to these arrangements must be made to the Schools Adjudicator by **15 May 2021**. Further information is available from the [\*\*Office of the Schools Adjudicator\*\*](#).

If you have any queries, please contact Jan Scott on 01473 264657 or at [jan.scott@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:jan.scott@suffolk.gov.uk).

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## The Key and GovernorHub Promotion

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

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

Governors are currently able to purchase the Schools' Choice subscription package which includes access to GovernorHub, Schools' Choice resources, and governance advice and guidance via the Schools' Choice helpline. You can also purchase the Key for School Governors as a separate package. You can continue to purchase these items separately, but we would like to offer you the opportunity to purchase them together at a reduced price. Please contact Schools' Choice at [governor.support@schoolschoice.org](mailto:governor.support@schoolschoice.org) for a price if this would interest you.

***The Key for School Governors provides role-specific, expert-led guidance for every member of your board. Membership will:***

- *Guide your board on how to support your school effectively*
- *Keep your board up to date with the latest sector news and next steps*

**GovernorHub is specifically built for governors and governing boards. With GovernorHub you can...**

- **Store documents securely** with tightly controlled access, communicate easily with all members of the board and keep a shared calendar of meetings
  - **Track governance-specific information** such as constitution, roles, committees, governor types and terms of office
  - **Download a wide range of reports** on vacancies, membership, meetings, attendance, declarations of interest and more
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## Is your Primary School Interested in Getting Involved with Educational Research?

**IMPORTANCE: USEFUL TO KNOW**

**WHO IT'S FOR: ALL PRIMARY AND INFANT SCHOOLS**

The information below has recently been sent to Headteachers and is included here for your information.



The University of Oxford's '**Teaching Effective Early Mathematics and Understanding in Primary (TEEMUP) schools**' study is looking for 100 primary schools in the East of England to help them evaluate whether targeted, evidence based professional development (PD) for Reception and Year 1 teachers improves children's mathematical and self-regulation outcomes in Reception and Year 1. Your school will benefit from free or subsidised PD for up to 3 members of staff and will receive £750.

To find out more about how your school can get involved, visit the TEEMUP [website](#) or come along to our virtual information session with Dr Denise Kingston (TEEMUP Project Manager) on Tuesday 4 May 2021 at 4pm.

Please email [ELStandardsandexcellence@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:ELStandardsandexcellence@suffolk.gov.uk) with the email subject 'TEEMUP study' to be invited to the virtual information session.

If you have any queries, please contact Kathryn Roper at [Kathryn.roper@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Kathryn.roper@suffolk.gov.uk) or on 07595091940.

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If you have any thoughts or suggestions regarding Governor Headlines or would like to find out more about any of the topics covered; please contact [governorheadlines@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:governorheadlines@suffolk.gov.uk).