

Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Clerks Network Meeting

9th September 2020

This first 'remote' RGA event was well attended and experienced only minor technical issues that contingency planning meant were quickly resolved.

Alice Boon updated governors about the current Ofsted inspection regime, how remote learning should work, the local lockdown planning infrastructure, and how the government's £1bn catch up fund will be deployed.

Governors asked a number of questions and these, together with responses, are highlighted in italics.

What is Ofsted up to?

Ofsted inspectors have returned to their 'day jobs' in schools however HMIs are conducting 1 day inspections involving time with senior leaders but not governors. These inspections check how schools are returning to a normal curriculum including a 'remote' contingency and how they are implementing the, admittedly, sometimes confusing DfE guidance. 'Normal' inspections are expected to resume in January 2021,

Governors need to ask how schools will cover the full curriculum.

Strong safeguarding focus as usual to check vulnerable are supported. Inspections concentrate on less well performing schools.

Interested in barriers to getting children, particularly disadvantaged, back to school including physical issues relating to school buildings, staffing etc.

Delivering a good quality of education via distance learning

Schools need to be ready to 'flip' to remote learning integrated with the classroom such that children continue to receive the same quality of education remotely as in the classroom.

Governor Question: how will families without appropriate technology be supported?

Response: government is claiming to expand access to technology; important that teachers ask for it. Should be enough to deal with a class that is sent home if not a whole school.

Governors should:

- Practise 'HMI' type questions – perhaps using the HT report template.
- Stay strategic. Let HT deal with operational issues.
- Ask what training is in place for teachers in the delivery of remote learning
- Ensure school improvement remains a focus in the school development plan.
- Ask about local lockdown contingency planning
- Ask how staff shortages will be managed to minimise disruption to learning.

- Ask how children will continue to access the full learning sequence,
- Ask how assessment will work.

Governor question: What happens when we need testing kits?

Response: there is a test site at Newbury racecourse but hard to book on. There is an acknowledged shortage of tests in the South East. Kate Reynolds (Head of Education) talking to PHE about this and concerned governors should contact their MP.

Governor Question: Contingency plans built on assumption that an individual who has been exposed will be tested. What happens when someone has symptoms and it isn't possible to get tests for those exposed.

Response: Unions have made this point and the only response can be to follow PHE guidance.

Governor question: We have a disciplinary process that has run on for months meaning the member of staff isn't available. Union not happy with a virtual meeting to resolve the issue.

Response: We know there is a backlog of parental complaints as well as disciplinary processes. HR will do their best but stuck due to DfE guidance.

Governor Comment: Had distanced f2f complaint which worked so it is possible to resolve issues if all parties agree to use remote option. There is a 'Walk In' centre in slough, apparently that does not require booking.

Local lockdown in Reading?

PHE is the lead agency and RBC have public health officers. If anyone has symptoms or a positive test it becomes a PHE issue; they will take decisions etc.

HT briefings have provided full details and HTs will report to BFfC in parallel with PHE to assist will information flow.

Governors don't need to be consulted and the advice is not to engage with parents but direct them to PHE. Governor role is to be aware of risk assessment and make sure it is regularly reviewed; consider staff shortages and mitigants and readiness to 'flip' to remote learning.

The RBC public health official responsible for any local lockdown lead will be at RGA Safeguarding Event (1st October 2020) to explain what schools do in such an eventuality.

Governors' responsibilities re Pandemic Catch Up Funding

Designed by civil service with little consultation with schools.

Ambition is that disadvantaged get support so they catch up. Education is not optional. All children in school receiving high quality education so attendance is a big thing.

Curriculum should continue to be broad and ambitious but understood that there may be a focus on core subject until summer term but by then all subjects are covered.

Remote education should be high quality and aligned with in school teaching and schools are expected to have developed a remote capability.

There is an allocation of £80 per pupil for 2020/21 academic year spread over 3 payments based on headcount.

Expectations are that this funding will be used in line with DfE guidance that is based on the EEF research evidence showing that tutoring in small groups or up to 3 is the appropriate approach.

To deliver this a National Tutoring Programme (NTP) has been created using vetted companies with 25% of costs from the £80 per pupil received by schools with the balance centrally funded.

Governor Question – why select NTP tutor rather than someone known to the school and children?

Response – tutoring in small groups using existing staff may be acceptable but Governors should ask to see evidence for that approach. Existing staff can, of course, sign up with one of the recommended NTP providers as a tutor.

Focus on who needs to support; likely to be the existing disadvantaged.

NTP coaches; staff that can be employed directly via Teach first. Should work on similar grounds (i.e. schools do day-to-day management but no details yet).

Governors should treat it like PP or sports premium with some communication to parents via the website.

Questions to ask include:

- What are the catch-up priorities?
- How children will be prioritised and identified?

Governor Question: should there be a 'Policy' for remote learning?

Response: Yes, it may be an operational statement rather than a 'policy' but there should be something written down for governors to review.