

# GOVERNOR HEADLINES

Welcome to issue #37 of Governor Headlines for July 2020.

This is the last issue of the term and of the school year and what a school year it has been. None of us could possibly have anticipated the challenges that education professionals would face this year. However, we have made it to the end of term, and everyone is not only ready for a break but have well and truly earned one. If you joined the Governor Headlines Live event on Tuesday of last week you would have heard, firsthand, the praise that was shared on behalf of the Local Authority but let me share this again. The work that has been done by school leaders and governors in Suffolk on behalf of our young people has been nothing short of sensational. If you need support, advice or guidance over the summer then please do not hesitate to pick up the phone or email.

This edition of Governor Headlines contains a summary of our first virtual governance session, information on the new Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance, the Future Chairs recruitment service and the new RSHE Portal, as well as an update on Schools' Choice governor training.

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

## CORE GOVERNANCE INFORMATION

### The Knowledge

Please find the latest edition of **The Knowledge** for July 2020 [here](#).

This edition of the knowledge was sent out as a separate document on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> July. It is attached here again, for your reference.



## Governor Headlines Live

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

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

On Tuesday the 14<sup>th</sup> July we held our first online governance session for LA maintained schools, "Governor Headlines Live". We really welcomed the opportunity to speak with you, share thoughts on governance in the new school year and answer your questions. The feedback for the session has been positive and we thank all of you that were able to attend.

For those of you that weren't able to attend the meeting, this article will offer a brief summary of the topics discussed, however if you would like to access the PowerPoint presentation that we used during the session please visit our website at [www.suffolk.gov.uk/govern](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/govern) .

### **Balancing Responsibilities**

Gill Larkin, Head of School Leadership Development, Suffolk County Council

There are a range of roles and needs that you as governors are working to balance at the moment, including but not limited to:

- the need for children to be back in school and have access to a full educational experience
- the need to support the work-life balance and wellbeing of staff (including the Headteacher)
- a changing landscape and changing government guidance
- the unknown and the emotional impact of not knowing everything including the short, medium and long-term future.
- the role of challenge to school leaders.

This is a lot to consider and we appreciate that balancing these needs isn't always easy. A starting point is the question, "How is Everyone?"

Governing boards and school leaders should have regard to staff and Headteacher work-life balance and wellbeing and all staff should be aware of proposed measures and new processes. School staff have been preparing for September with new guidance at a time when they would usually have been winding down. Many have worked through Easter and half-term and are now running on very little energy. The Summer holidays will therefore provide a welcome respite for all and all staff should have full breaks while the school or setting is closed to children.

Throughout this term there has not been a 'one-size-fits-all' approach when it comes to schools wider opening for all pupils and the same will be the case for the full opening of all schools for all pupils in September. Every setting is different and school leaders are best placed to understand the needs of their schools and communities and balance these with managing risk. To help retain a sense of balance as you work with your school leaders it's important that there is a culture in which the school is a welcoming and safe place. Pupils and staff should feel reassured and supported and leaders trusted to make decisions.

In summary, wellbeing of leaders, staff and children comes first and helping to ensure this is your priority. You can then move on to how the school is planning for September, which will be structured by government guidance, and your curriculum offer for pupils.

#### **Did you know?**

We are currently running a Leadership Wellbeing Support helpline which is available to all school leaders, including governors, of all schools in Suffolk. The helpline can be contacted by calling 01473 265656 or emailing [leadershipwellbeingsupport@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:leadershipwellbeingsupport@suffolk.gov.uk).

#### **School Recovery: What is the role of governors?**

Joanna Howell, Senior Governance Advisor, Suffolk County Council

School recovery ultimately sits inside your school improvement cycle, but it is a more focused, streamlined, step to put the school back on the right path. Schools that will be the most successful won't be looking to return to the same place that they were before the pandemic but will map a new path that is based on reflection, reframing and rebuilding.

Reflect: A governor's role in this process is to ask questions about what you as governors have achieved over the past 12/18/24 months and whether governance is fit for what the school needs next moving forwards. Do you have the right people around the table, with the right skills? How can you prove governance impacts outcomes? Governors also need to reflect on what the school was doing well before the outbreak, and to keep and grow this as you move forwards. What needs to improve? Does this need to be actioned in the shorter or longer term? And how is this reflected in your School Development Plan (SDP)? What could leaders stop doing in the shorter term? This links to the discussion above by Gill Larkin about balancing priorities and leader's wellbeing. Is everything that is being done at the moment necessary to move the school forwards, or could some things be (temporarily) put on hold? Are there any activities that need to be started or different ways of working identified?

Reframe: Is the vision for the school right? The vision acts as your North star and helps the school to plot its journey. Is this vision still appropriate? What additional skills do governors need to support in achieving the vision? Are these skills that can be developed with training, or do you need to recruit people with specialist backgrounds? Revise the SDP and be ruthless with objectives here – halt things that may not put you back on your track. Be single-minded; re-build the school so that it is bigger and better than before. In conjunction with leaders you may wish to develop a shorter-term recovery plan as a pre-cursor to school improvement. Regardless of the methodology you use here, you have an opportunity here to define your success.

Rebuild. What are you going to measure to look at the impact? How are you going to measure it and what are you looking for? There are no external exam validation or SATS results this year – in agreement with leaders decide how you can measure this. You can ask these questions. Leaders do have a lot going on but governors are accountable too and you need to be clear about how things are for the children. You will also agree how governors can monitor remotely and when it will be appropriate to be back in school.

If you have any queries about the contents of this article, or about governance in general, please contact the Leadership and Governance team at [governance@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:governance@suffolk.gov.uk) or on 01473 263972.

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## Governor Headlines Live – Next Event

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

We are looking at holding more virtual events in the future and we would like to hear from you about the issues you would like addressed. Feedback from the last event has identified areas around remote monitoring, the role of governance in light of Covid-19, risk assessments and safeguarding updates. If there is anything you would like to suggest please let us know by emailing us at [governance@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:governance@suffolk.gov.uk) . Currently, September is most popular for a second event.

## Keeping Children Safe in Education

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

As governors, you should all be familiar with the Department for Education's [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) (KCSiE) statutory guidance for schools and colleges on safeguarding children and safer recruitment.

All governors are required to read at least part 1 of the document, and governors with specific responsibility for monitoring safeguarding should be familiar with the whole document.

A new version of KCSiE will be published in September and will include new information on mental health, child criminal exploitation (CCE) and child sexual exploitation (CSE), information on supporting children with a social worker, indicators that someone might not be suitable to work with children and new guidance on handling allegations against supply staff.

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## In-Person Governance Meetings

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

A common question that we've been asked over the last few weeks is "When can governors start to meet in person again?"

The Department for Education updated their guidance on the 17<sup>th</sup> July, to state that "depending on their risk assessment, schools may choose to continue to host governor meetings virtually". This implies that the decision to hold in-person governance meetings in school is dependent on each school's individual risk assessment.

However, it's advisable that meetings should continue to be held virtually wherever possible in order to avoid unnecessary visitors to schools. The feedback we have received on virtual meetings has been very positive and we are extremely grateful and heartened by the dedication and adaptability that you have all shown over the last few months.

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## Future Chairs Recruitment Programme

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

May's edition of Governor Headlines featured an article on skills audits as part of school improvement, especially in terms of succession planning for governors and the Chair and Vice-Chair roles.

The National Governance Association (NGA) recommend that Chairs are limited to six years in post at the same school. It's advised that governing bodies hold annual elections for their Chair and Vice-Chair and many of you will be doing this at your first full governing body meeting of the new school year.

We therefore wanted to bring to your attention the Future Chairs recruitment service which is run by the NGA alongside Inspiring Governance. The service is free and designed to help governing bodies in need of a new Chair connect with volunteers with the right skills and willingness to take on a leadership role. Future Chairs offers a bespoke service for all schools in the Ipswich opportunity area, in which they will work directly with you to understand your needs and identify suitable candidates. They will then carry out an initial screening interview before introducing you to the candidate.

If you are not part of the Ipswich Opportunity area you are still able to search for local volunteers by registering with Inspiring Governance at [www.inspiringgovernance.org](http://www.inspiringgovernance.org) .

For further information on the Future Chairs service please click [here](#). If you are unsure whether your school is part of the Ipswich opportunity area, or would like advice on succession planning, please contact us as [governance@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:governance@suffolk.gov.uk) or on 01473 260972.

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### RSHE Portal Ready for all Suffolk Schools

**IMPORTANCE: USEFUL TO KNOW**

**WHO IT'S FOR: ALL SCHOOLS, CHAIRS OF GOVERNORS AND GOVERNORS WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR RSHE**

The Relationships Education, Relationships & Sex Education and Health Education (RSHE) Portal is ready for PSHE and senior leadership teams to access. This is a completely free resource for all Suffolk schools, created by Public Health Suffolk to centralise the information schools need to help prepare for and embed the new statutory RSHE Guidance.

This platform will contain information to help schools lesson plan, signpost pupils and families to support, write the RSE Policy, keep up to date with events and the latest RSHE/PSHE news, and more. It is important to add that this is not the only resource schools could be using, but another toolkit in their “armoury” and a means of drawing resources together into a central place.

So far, 84% of schools are accessing the portal, reporting that they are finding it a useful tool. The Schools Engagement Coordinator, Jane Stannard, is eager to hear from the remaining 54 settings as she is keen to get logins set up so schools can access this resource at their own pace in readiness for the new academic year when the statutory RSHE guidance goes live.

All schools have been contacted about the portal via email or a phone call and this has been featured in Headlines, Schools' Choice Schools News and the RSHE weekly newsletters, so schools should already have a knowledge of the existence of this resource. Jane would like to ask governors to check in with their schools to ensure that they are aware of the RSHE Portal and find out if they are accessing it. If they do not yet have access, Jane would further request that governors encourage schools to make contact with her to either arrange access or discuss further if they feel they would like to know more about the portal first.

Jane is encouraging anyone involved in teaching or oversight of the curriculum to have a login, including Chairs of Governors, and named governors for RSHE.

If any named governors or Chairs would like access to the portal then please contact Jane to arrange this at [jane.stannard@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:jane.stannard@suffolk.gov.uk) .

## Schools' Choice Governor Training

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

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

All Schools' Choice training for 2020-21 is available to book on GovernorHub. If you need help setting up your account, please contact them on [governor.training@schoolschoice.org](mailto:governor.training@schoolschoice.org)

Please take a look at the new [brochure](#) containing details of all Schools' Choice sessions during the next academic year.

Schools' Choice are currently planning to resume face to face training in 2020-21 but this is subject to review depending on government guidance. They are also intending to continue to offer a mix of face to face and online sessions following feedback from many governors regarding how much they have enjoyed being able to access the training online. You may therefore find that some of the sessions advertised in the brochure are switched to online delivery but will be informed of this if you have already made a booking.

### **NGA Chairs' Development Programme**

This programme is currently being offered online. It is fully funded by the DfE. Visit the [NGA website](#) for more information. When you click 'book your place' choose the **Summer 2020 cohort** as this is the online one.

### **NGA Learning Link E-Learning**

If your school subscribes to the Schools' Choice training package you can access this e-learning at no additional charge. Please contact Schools' Choice on [governor.training@schoolschoice.org](mailto:governor.training@schoolschoice.org) if you would like help registering for an account.

There are over 50 modules available covering the following areas:

- Structures, roles and responsibilities
- Good governance
- Vision, ethos and strategic direction
- Pupil success and wellbeing
- The best use of resources
- Compliance

Do give the e-learning a try during this time.



Have a comment to make?

Contact: [qualitymattersineducationandlearning@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:qualitymattersineducationandlearning@suffolk.gov.uk)  
to comment, favourably or otherwise, on any aspect of Suffolk County Council's school improvement strategy.