

Camden Learning

GOVERNORS' NEWSLETTER



GOVERNORS' TRAINING

GOVERNOR INDUCTION 3 - SAFEGUARDING FOR NEW GOVERNORS

Tuesday 12 December 2023 6pm - 6:45pm



SUCCESSION PLANNING

Wednesday 13 December 2023 6pm - 7:30pm



CLERKS' BRIEFING

Wednesday 10 January 2024 4pm - 5:30pm



SYSTEM LEADERSHIP

Tuesday 16 January 2024 3:30pm - 5pm



MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL FINANCES FOR SCHOOL GOVERNORS

Tuesday 16 January 2024 6pm - 7:30pm



PRIMARY SCHOOLS' DATA - ANALYSE SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND INSPECTION DATA SUMMARY REPORT

Monday 22 January 2024 6pm - 7:30pm



CAMDEN GOVERNORS' BRIEFING

Wednesday 24 January 2024 6pm - 7:30pm



INCLUSIVE GOVERNING BODIES WITH SHEKEILA SCARLETT

Thursday 1 February 2024 6pm - 7:30pm



SECONDARY SCHOOLS' DATA - ANALYSE SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND INSPECTION DATA SUMMARY REPORT

Monday 5 February 2024 6pm - 7:30pm



A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

It was good to attend the first meeting of the newly formatted Chairs' Network which took place on 21 November. The meeting was well attended, with lively engagement on a range of topics.

Chairs discussed succession planning, as it related to headteachers and senior staff. There were differing perspectives, including from those who had carried out recent recruitment into headteacher posts and those who had formed partnerships under executive heads. The latter group was positive, but that didn't dispel the anxiety of some Chairs who were concerned they might be pushed into a federated approach. There is no suggestion at all that schools will be forced to federate. Indeed, all the research I have seen indicates that this approach never works. Discussion of the merits of each approach and their place within the wider Camden strategy prompted a discussion about succession planning for Chairs themselves, with many reflecting on the difficulty of identifying other governors willing to step up and take on what can be a demanding and time-consuming role. Owen Rees stressed that he is always happy to talk to individual governors about governance matters and he can be contacted on owen.rees@camden.gov.uk.

As we are finalising the Implementation Plan to underpin Year 2 of Building Back Stronger, it was a good time to hear views about current pressures and priorities. Some support for all the issues identified will be built into the final plan.

Chairs also received an update on place planning from Nick Smith, whose slides are [here](#). The more detailed report submitted to Camden's Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee is [here](#). While Nick told us that the position in overall numbers is stable, there was discussion of the impact of the numbers under roll in secondaries and its ongoing and the potential impact on particular schools. Camden Council is establishing a Place Planning Forum, which will include governor representation, to ensure that schools are more closely involved in planning and responding to changing demographics and rolls.

This is always a busy and exhausting term. This has been really evident in the many meetings with headteachers that I have attended recently. There isn't a single Camden

school that wouldn't be able to provide a strong list of achievements since September, but I can also see the pressure current leadership and management issues are placing on headteachers themselves. Headship is a far harder job today than when I was a secondary head. About 18 months ago the issue of how governors might give more direct support to heads was raised at a Governors' Forum meeting and as a result Stephen Hall, CEO of Camden Learning, introduced a new and more structured approach to coaching which was warmly received. We have the second meeting of the new Camden Governors' Briefing at 6pm on Wednesday, 24 January and that seems a good time to refresh our previous discussion on support for headteachers. The meeting will be held online and all governors are most welcome to attend.

Finally, it has been good to welcome Tim Aldridge to Camden as Executive Director, Children and Learning and also, as a new Director on the Camden Learning Board. Tim has over 20 years' successful experience- and an impressive record of achievement- working in children's services in London. He started his career in Camden where he spent 13 years in practitioner and leadership roles. Tim tells me that it's great to be back in Camden and he feels very privileged to return to work here. He is particularly interested in finding out more about Camden schools and the collaborative approach on which Camden Learning is based. Tim asked me to emphasise his appreciation of the commitment, passion and dedication of school governors, and that he looks forward to learning more about the fantastic work that you do leading our amazing family of Camden schools. Tim has already attended a wide range of headteacher meetings, including welcoming the heads who started this term, and is keen to introduce himself personally to governors next term.



With best wishes and continuing thanks for your leadership and tremendous support of Camden schools.

Christine Gilbert
Chair, Camden Learning

ATTENDANCE IN CAMDEN SCHOOLS

School attendance is a high priority for everyone in Camden because we know the impact absence from school has on pupil attainment. This is particularly an issue for our disadvantaged pupils who are disproportionately amongst our persistently absent pupils.

We have been heartened to start seeing an improvement in this area. Hard work by primary schools, who have been working with their families and pupils to overcome barriers to attendance, means we have seen attendance climb to 95.2%. Primary school attendance is now just above national average. Schools have reported that working with individual parents/carers to identify the reasons for absence and find solutions has been particularly effective at improving attendance.

Secondary schools have been working similarly hard to improve attendance but securing improvement has been more of a challenge though it is slightly up on last year at 91.6%.

Camden Learning is continuing to support schools in several ways to improve attendance. At the start of term, we began a back-to-school attendance initiative which included posters, leaflets and social media posts to promote the importance of regular attendance. All bar

two schools in Camden now share live attendance data with the DfE and Camden, which means we can help with analysis and target support. Also, three additional staff have been recruited to work with schools to improve attendance and behaviour. They will all have joined Camden Learning by the beginning of December.

Over 20 governors attended our Pupil Attendance Training on the 5 October and many have now signed up to the weekly attendance email update and access a range of attendance resources. If governors wish to be added to the update or get access to the resources, they can fill in this [form](#) and they will add them to the distribution lists. If you missed the training, there will be another session on Monday, 29 January 2024, from 2pm-4pm at the Crowndale Centre. You can book a place by emailing pas@camden.gov.uk.



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READING CAMPAIGN BRINGS AUTHOR TO CAMDEN SCHOOLS

Camden Learning's *Every Child A Reader by 7* campaign has teamed up with Bloomsbury Publishing to bring children's author Caryl Hart into Camden schools. Caryl is an award-winning author who writes picture books and fiction for young children.

Children at Argyle and St Mary & St Pancras primary schools near King's Cross were able to enjoy Caryl read her wonderful 'Meet the Weather' book and ask questions about how she works as an author. They were also delighted to be able to take home their own copy of the book.



BROOKFIELD FOREST SCHOOL GARDEN OFFICIALLY OPENED

Brookfield Primary School's new Forest School Garden has been officially opened by Camden Mayor, Councillor Nazma Rahman.

The event featured forest inspired poetry and West African drumming and the school community celebrated how, through kindness, responsibility and achievement, they had come together to create a garden that can be enjoyed for generations to come.

The following week, Brookfield was named 'Super School' winner in the Camden Eco-Champion awards in recognition of the garden's creation and the work of its eco-committee.

Congratulations to Kiana in Year 6 who received high praise in the 'Mini-Warrior' category for her dedication to these projects. Read all about it in this [article](#) in the Camden New Journal.



GOVERNOR DIVERSITY

Our efforts to support our governing bodies to represent Camden communities have continued this term. The latest annual report on diversity is available on the [Governor Hub](#). This sets out the work we've done and have planned for this year, including the launch of a Young Governors' Programme for September 2024. We will be updating you on this as the year goes on. Next term, we have Shekeila Scarlett, a former participant and now one of Britain's youngest chairs of governors, presenting on her experiences.

This term governors enjoyed an excellent session on neurodiversity from Daniel Brooke. Neurodiversity is the idea that cognitive conditions such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia and dyspraxia are natural variations in the way people think and process information. Daniel, who is neuro diverse himself, talked about a type of organisational diversity and inclusion that seeks to embrace and maximise the talents of people who think differently. Daniel explained how organisations and teams could work to include and address the challenges that neurodiverse staff and governors can make and to maximise the contribution of the neurodiverse to our staff and governor teams.

There was also a session in November from Orlene Badu on Developing an Anti-Racist School. Orlene – who led a workshop at the Governor Conference and will be leading related sessions for school staff in the new year – gave governors a provocative and useful presentation outlining the steps on the ongoing journey of anti-racism. Areas of focus included the ways in which governors should dig into outcomes data to ensure that any gaps are understood and tackled and the ways in which governors might think about issues such as behaviour and the curriculum through an anti-racist lens. She also reflected on what staff should consider in their own practice and how governors might consider this when making decisions or visiting schools.

SAFEGUARDING – WHAT SCHOOLS AND GOVERNORS NEED TO KNOW

Government policy updates have placed safeguarding responsibilities on schools when letting their premises to organisations such as supplementary schools, community groups and clubs.

Governing body and school should be aware of the [After-school clubs, community activities and tuition: safeguarding guidance for providers](#) and use this when drawing up a suitable hire agreement. Please note the [checklist on pages 11 and 12](#).

Organisations providing activities must have appropriate safeguarding policies and providers, the school, and governing body should have arrangements in place to liaise on safeguarding matters where appropriate.

Parents should be informed of [how they can best safeguard their children in the provider's supplementary schools and activities](#). The link below to the Parent leaflet may be of particular interest.

For further support and guidance please contact Susan Morris, Camden Council's supplementary schools and out of school settings (OOSS) advisor at susan.morris@camden.gov.uk or on 0207 974 4869 or 07827 977 302.



Helpful Links:

[Out of School Education Settings - Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership CSCP](#)

[Using after-school clubs, tuition and community activities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[After-school clubs, community activities and tuition: safeguarding guidance for providers - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Keeping children safe during clubs, tuition and activities – Summary leaflet \(windows.net\)](#)

[Using after-school clubs, tuition and community activities – A parent and carer's guide \(windows.net\)](#)

DR CLAUDIA SUMNER – NEW RESEARCH ADVISER, CAMDEN LEARNING

Dr Claudia Sumner joined Camden Learning in September in the newly created role of Research Adviser. Claudia will work with colleagues to promote engagement using research and evaluation so that Camden Learning’s work, including that of individual schools, is supported and improved through better use of evidence.

She previously worked at the Child Poverty Action group on the *Cost of the School Day* project, which gathered evidence from pupils, staff and families about cost-related barriers to schooling.

Claudia has extensive experience in education, in policy, research and practice roles. She has worked at the National Foundation for Educational Research, the UCL Institute of Education and the House of Commons Education Select Committee. Prior to this, she was a primary school teacher in Inner London.



Claudia can be contacted at
Claudia.sumner@camden.gov.uk



GEORGINA WATTS - INTERIM DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMES: STEAM AND PARTNERSHIPS

Georgina Watts has joined Camden Learning as Interim Director of Programmes, STEAM and Partnerships, covering Danielle Tobin’s maternity leave.

Camden’s **STEAM agenda** aims to create partnerships between schools, businesses and research institutions so young people benefit from the borough’s tech, scientific and creative ecosystem. Working with over 100 local partners – including Google, the Francis Crick Institute, Argent, Central Saint Martin’s and Bennett’s Associates Architects – the programme connects the borough’s 22,000 students with local employers through work experience and other engagements.

As Director, Georgina also oversees Camden Learning’s computing, music and careers agendas and on external partnerships such as the AEPA (Area-Based Education Partnerships Association), a national network of education partnerships.

Georgina is secondment from the Department for Education, having previously worked in the business department. She has led the successful delivery of several government programmes. These have included Free Courses for Jobs (providing adults with free A-level equivalent qualifications to boost their employment potential) and the Automotive Investment Organisation (securing foreign direct investment to create more jobs in the automotive supply chain).



Georgina can be contacted on
Georgina.watts@camden.gov.uk



UNITED NATIONS (UN) SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND CAMDEN SCHOOLS

How do our schools inspire their pupils? How do we teach them to be changemakers in the world? How do schools in Camden put equality, environmental awareness, and global responsibility at the heart of their curriculum?

These are some of the important questions addressed in the [Report on Camden Schools and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) (UN SDGs), commissioned from [The Centre for Education and Youth](#) (CfEY) by Camden Learning.

At November's [Camden Conversation](#), which launched the Report, staff from the Torriano/Brecknock Federation and the UCL Academy talked with infectious enthusiasm about how they have embedded these Goals, set out by the United Nations, into all aspects of their schools. They show pupils that *every one of them* can take steps to make the world a better place. The Goals, which were adopted by all UN member states in 2015, are a plan of action to protect the planet, improve people's life experiences and build peaceful societies.

Teachers joined Alix Robertson of CfEY, the main author of the Report, to explain how participating schools (which include Christopher Hatton and Parliament Hill, in addition to Torriano/Brecknock and UCL Academy) are weaving the 17 UN SDGs throughout the curriculum to improve oracy, develop leadership skills and enhance the local environment. The goals are flexible enough to use in alignment with other programmes. UCL Academy has projected them on to UCL [Grand Challenges](#), upon which the school curriculum is based.

The goals can be incorporated into many aspects of school life - assemblies, trips, extracurricular activities and local community projects - and pupils are leading the change they want to see, through:

- Eating less meat at lunchtime and ensuring fish is sustainably sourced
- Growing fruit and vegetables
- Removing plastic wrapping from packed lunches
- Banning plastic straws and recycling glass bottles
- Using active travel to and from school
- Lobbying the catering provider to ban single use plastics.

Engagement with the UN SDGs has led to exciting opportunities for pupils. Those at Christopher Hatton engaged directly with their local environment when they became involved in the development of a new housing estate close to the school and were given the opportunity to feed back on the design of the buildings, particularly on the elements concerned with sustainability, such as the inclusion of green roofs and solar heating panels.

Enthused by the Goals, pupils have participated in the democratic process and been able to see the impact of their own agency. They have lobbied MPs to improve air quality in the borough. Christopher Hatton pupils marched to the headquarters of ITN during the COP Summit to show their strength of feeling about threats to our environment. A Parliament Hill pupil attending the Glasgow COP Conference as a youth delegate was interviewed on Sky News.



The Goals provide a framework to discuss difficult topics with pupils of all ages. At Brecknock/Torriano, the pupils talked about the fact that, although progress has been made globally on some of the Goals, their achievement has been delayed by Covid 19 and government policy. This year is the hottest ever for the planet and the UN SDGs mean that pupils have a way to process that fact and are inspired and empowered to do something to tackle the huge challenges facing the world.



Claudia can be contacted on
Claudia.sumner@camden.gov.uk

The schools that are already engaged with the UN SDGs are keen to get others involved. Their advice is:

- Engage with schools already involved - contact them and visit
- Don't start from scratch – speak to other educators to see what you can replicate
- Nominate a member of staff to lead on the work and involve parents and governors
- Connect with other local organisations focused on sustainability who want to support the community

If you would like to get involved, make connections or just want more information, Dr Claudia Sumner, Camden Learning's new Research Adviser, would be happy to help. She can be contacted on Claudia.sumner@camden.gov.uk.

ACTOR MELISSA JOHNS OPENS ROYAL FREE HOSPITAL SCHOOL'S NEW SITE AT KONSTAM CENTRE, HIGHGATE

On Friday, 20 October, the new site in Highgate was officially opened by the school's former higher level teaching assistant turned actor, Melissa Johns, alongside staff, students, parents and carers, teachers, governors and local councillors.

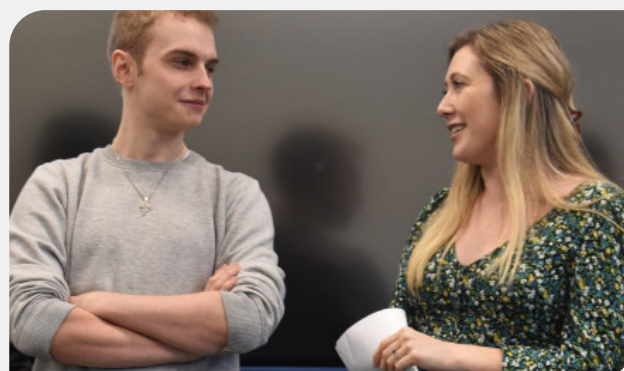
The Royal Free Hospital Children's School (RFHCS) is a community special school for pupils aged five to 16 years and provides education to patients on the paediatric wards at the Royal Free Hospital.

Having previously run the outreach programmes from two separate sites, these services are now under one roof at the Konstam Centre. This is making them easier to access, while increasing the number of local children and young people who can benefit.

The RFHCS's new Konstam building is home to a range of specialist support from educational psychology to speech and language and drama therapy, with about 40 young people aged 5 to 16 currently accessing full or part-time support there.

Former RFHCS student Jack, 25, speaking at the launch event, said:

"I don't know where I would be without this place. I didn't engage with mainstream school but I wanted to come to school when I was here [on the Royal Free Hospital site]. The work being done here is just so important - it's amazing to see how far it has come and how much it has grown."



MEET THE BOARD – CLLR MARCUS BOYLAND, CAMDEN COUNCIL CABINET MEMBER

I've been Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families since last June and on the Board of Camden Learning since then.

I went to school in Coventry and was recruited as a school governor by one Estelle Morris, who was teaching at the city's Sydney Stringer School at the time! We met again recently at a schools' partnership conference – it was a bit like *Who Do You Think You Are*.

I went on to do Politics at City of London Polytechnic and stayed in Camden. After trying to make it as an Britpop Indie rockstar (managed by no less than Ricky Gervais), I turned to a career in market and user experience research. Having travelled the world hearing what folks thought of Nokia mobiles, Apple iPods, Google search engines, driverless cars and Fitbits, I thought it might be time to put down some roots and give back, so I became a Labour councillor and got elected for Gospel Oak in 2017.

I feel incredibly honoured to be a local councillor. There are the highs and lows of being able to achieve things for your residents and your community, but often doors are just closed tight due to the terrible budget cuts we have all had to face in recent years. But the work of our amazing teachers, schools' staff, governors and Camden officers and the Camden Learning team continues to inspire me, although it must be said, our wonderful Camden children are the real heroes of the story. Here's to them and our brilliant future.

Quickfire:

Regent's Park or Hampstead Heath?

Hampstead Heath – it's great for pretending you're in the countryside, wild swimming, the freezing Lido, forests, athletics, le Carre, Dickens and the stone of free speech – which as a politician I'm tethered to!

Jubilee Line or Northern Line?

Normally I would say the Northern, but as Kentish Town is closed, Stanmore here we come!

iPhone or Android?

Android all the way. I don't like being tied into Apple's ecosystem. That said, I was still buying cassette tapes when friends were downloading from Napster, so what do I know.

Novel or biography?

Planning committee papers! Though I'm reading the Samuel Pepys diary day by day, taking each corresponding date 360 years ago, so I guess that would be biography.

WhatsApp or SnapChat?

What is SnapChat?

Early bird or night owl?

Night Owl. I've always been happy working late and at weekends. I think it's because I did a lot of retail work when I was young and it sticks with you.

Favourite film?

Based on number of views, I'd have to say Christopher Nolan's *Tenet*, and I still don't get it! That or Spike Lee's *Do The Right Thing*.

Number 1 hobby?

Cooking. While I cook for us most evenings, it's nice to have a few hours on a Sunday afternoon pottering about and coming up with freshly made inedible creations.



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Ideas for items all welcome, please send to:
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