

Camden Learning

GOVERNORS' NEWSLETTER



GOVERNORS' TRAINING

GOVERNOR INDUCTION 2: UNDERSTANDING YOUR SCHOOL CONTEXT AND CHALLENGING AND SUPPORT SCHOOL LEADERS

Wednesday 5 June 2024 6pm - 8pm



GLOBAL MAJORITY GOVERNORS NETWORK

Thursday 6 June 2024 6pm - 7pm



CAMDEN CHAIRS' NETWORK

Monday 24 June 2024 6pm - 8pm



COMPLAINTS, INVESTIGATIONS AND PANELS: BEST PRACTICE FOR GOVERNORS

Thursday 27 June 2024 6pm - 7:30pm



SAFEGUARDING GOVERNORS' NETWORK

Monday 1 July 2024 6pm - 7:30pm



GOVERNOR INDUCTION 3 - SAFEGUARDING FOR NEW GOVERNORS

Tuesday 9 July 2024 5pm - 6pm



A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

This year's Governor Conference took place on Saturday 18 May, hosted very professionally by Maria Fidelis School. It was an inspiring and thought-provoking morning, with governors attending from many Camden schools. The informal, but fascinating, conversations that took place before and after the different sessions were a strong reminder of the value to be gained from in-person meetings. Many of these valuable conversations would just not have happened if we had been online.

The conference got off to a great start with Marc Rowland's keynote presentation on addressing educational disadvantage. He urged us all never to lower expectations based on a family's ability or capacity to support their child's learning and that these should not impact on our ambition for pupils. He highlighted the importance of governors using objective evaluation, focused on looking at a range of evidence, and the impact of the school's work and culture on pupils' learning and achievement. The slides from his presentation don't quite capture its motivational magic but are still well worth a read. Reading them loses some of the funny points he made about modelling what we preach. For example, you'll spot a slide emphasising 'Precision Matters' which then spells 'deprivation' incorrectly. You'll find his slides [here](#) but they have also been uploaded to Governor Hub, along with the video of the Camden Conversation that Marc led a few years ago for Camden Learning.

Next were the four workshops. In one, Sarah Horrocks took governors through the Digital Strategy. They learned what schools can and should be doing to prepare for the digital revolution, from the practical to the strategic, and how governors can effectively work in this area.

Led by Danny Silverstone, Chair at Parliament Hill, the workshop on diversity for governors addressed one of our key and longstanding issues. The school's commitment to build a more diverse governing body has seen huge success. It was clear to me that this determination underpins Danny's leadership as Chair. He stressed the need to be alert to the dangers of group think. It was illuminating to hear some of the very practical and effective ways Parliament Hill recruits and retains a diverse governing body. Danny was very open about the challenges they face not only in sustaining this but also in developing as a board and as a team. One of their many innovative approaches has been to build their alumni networks to increase diversity. I left the session keen to find ways of involving more governors in the richness of Parliament Hill's thinking and planning.

Headteacher wellbeing is a major concern for governors and Viv Grant's workshop, drawing on her extensive and successful experience as a coach and school leader, helped orient governors to this vital area, understanding what works best for heads. She concluded the session by highlighting a range of practical ways in which things might be done differently to support headteacher wellbeing. These ideas are set out clearly in [her slides](#).

Finally, Chris Roberts covered attendance. As you know, Camden's school attendance remains an area of focus and a key driver of performance. Chris brought his wide

experience and insight to governors and left them with a better understanding of what can be done to support better attendance. Marc Rowland earlier had stressed the complexity of addressing attendance. One of the things he emphasised was the importance of seeing attendance issues through the lens of family and community.

Whenever I attend any sort of meeting involving Camden governors, I am inspired by your selfless commitment as volunteers and your passion for better education. That was really evident on Saturday. My thanks to all governors who attended but also to those of you who couldn't attend. I know you all routinely give hours of time not only in supporting your school but in building a stronger local system. Your work makes an important difference and is really appreciated.

All good wishes

Christine

Dame Christine Gilbert
Chair, Camden Learning



4. We use identity-first language: When discussing autism, we refer to individuals as 'autistic people,' to recognise and respect their preferred way of identifying themselves;
5. We challenge stereotypes: We address misconceptions and stereotypes about autism by promoting accurate information and showcasing the diversity within the autism community;
6. We promote autistic voices: We amplify the voices of autistic individuals by sharing their stories, artwork, and achievements. This helps us to raise awareness of their unique perspectives and contributions;
7. We encourage empathy and respect: We foster a culture of empathy and respect by teaching others to recognise and appreciate the strengths and differences of neurodiverse individuals;
8. We collaborate and reflect: We work together with the autism community (National Autistic Society, Camden Autism Partnership Board, Autism Education Trust) to develop and implement initiatives that promote acceptance. We regularly reflect on progress and we identify areas for improvement to ensure ongoing support and inclusivity.

This year's World Autism Acceptance Week took place 2-8 April. To mark this occasion, we organised a range of activities to take place the last week of the term, shaped by our inclusion ambassadors – a group of student volunteers from Y7-Y10 who champion inclusion at the school.

1. Simona Galluccio, one of our Lead SEND practitioners, and I delivered assemblies to each year group throughout the week. In these assemblies we unpicked the differences between autism awareness and autism acceptance and how this has, and will, continue to change our practices within the school.
2. Some of our students put together a video sharing their experience of learning in our school and living in the local community. This video was shared with the whole school through the tutors. This was then followed by a range of activities designed to support all our students to build on their previous learning to better understand neurodiversity.
3. Later in the week we encouraged students to embrace the theme of this year's World Autism Acceptance Week: Spectrum Colour Walk by attending school on Thursday 28 March wearing clothes that include a spectrum of colour.

Antonios Siorovigkas
Curriculum Leader for Autism provision

AUTISM ACCEPTANCE WEEK AT ACLAND BURGHLEY SCHOOL

The 2021 shift from referring to this week as 'Autism Awareness Week' to now referring to it as 'Autism Acceptance Week' reframes the conversation around autism to focus on intentional inclusion.

Christopher Banks, CEO of the Autism Society of America explained intentional inclusion as "Awareness is knowing that somebody has Autism, acceptance is when you include a person with autism in your activities". Or to simplify it even further: Awareness is easy. Acceptance requires actual work.

At Acland Burghley School we practise inclusion. For example, the number of students with SEND at our school is significantly above the national average. We are proud of this and we are proud that our school includes all young people from our local community.

Here are some of the ways we encourage and, most importantly, practise acceptance daily at Acland Burghley:

1. Through education: We offer resources and training to educate our staff about autism, including its strengths, challenges, and diverse experiences;
2. We promote inclusion: We encourage an inclusive classroom and school environment. We organise events where autistic and neurodiverse individuals can participate fully and feel accepted; including dance shows, theatre, art projects and assemblies;
3. We listen and learn: We take the time to listen to the perspectives and experiences of neurodiverse individuals and their families. This helps us foster empathy and understanding;

GLOBAL MAJORITY SCHOOLS NETWORK UPDATE

We are pleased to be moving along with our plans to develop a Global Majority Network for staff in Camden schools.

The network has the following aims for staff who are from a Global Majority heritage:

- Increasing the diversity of school leadership and representation in Camden schools and making them a place of choice for Global Majority teachers
- Providing a platform for current Global Majority staff in Camden, increasing a sense of belonging and amplifying their experience
- Developing the awareness of current school leadership teams and providing the means with which to proactively diversify recruitment
- Demystifying leadership and providing supported pathways to senior school leadership (e.g., through shadowing senior leaders, coaching and dismantling the structure).

The first Global Majority Schools Network event is being planned for the Autumn with a keynote speech by Amanda Wilson, author of *Letters to a Young Generation: Aspiring School Leaders* – a book that aims to encourage teachers from a BGM heritage to pursue leadership positions.



CAMDEN LEARNING AND GOOGLE TO DEVELOP AI CAMPUS

Camden Learning is collaborating with Google to develop an AI Campus for Camden students.

Camden Learning and Camden's STEAM programme are working to develop an AI Campus for pupils in the borough with support from Google. The Campus is in the earliest stages of design and development. It will aim to enable a diverse range of students to deepen their knowledge of AI and supporting subjects, as well as covering such things as the important ethical dimensions of AI and how it should best be used in the future, and the creativity and imagination involved in developing and applying new technologies.

The initiative has grown out of Camden's Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths (STEAM) programme, in which world-leading companies based in Camden partner with Camden Learning, the Council, and the local college. The main objectives of Camden's STEAM strategy are to create more pathways for young people to enter and succeed in a STEAM career; to engage more young people from underrepresented backgrounds in STEAM training and opportunities; and for employers based in the borough to diversify their local talent pipeline.

We are keen to hear from partners interested in getting involved with Camden's STEAM programme or the AI Campus. Please contact steampledge@camden.gov.uk to find out more.



SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING

All local authorities have a statutory duty to secure sufficient school places within their area and to consider appropriate special educational needs provision.

As part of its response to this duty, Camden Council publishes an [annual report](#) detailing trends and analysis relating to school places demand locally.

Over the past five years, Camden schools have experienced a significant reduction in the number of pupils needing a school place. Together with schools and communities the council has taken the difficult decisions to reduce the total number of places available. In the primary phase, this is now equivalent to 10 forms of entry and has included four school closures.

It has put our schools in a better place to address future trends but, with existing financial challenges that all schools are experiencing, reduced demand for school places continues to be a focus for the council and in the 'Building Back Stronger' education strategy.

To date, most of our decisions have been within the primary phase, however reductions in demand are now also being felt within the secondary sector. Whilst the council is engaging with those secondary schools most affected there will be further engagement with all schools throughout this academic year.

Forecasts of future pupil demand up to 2021 indicated a significant ongoing decline in pupil numbers. At that stage we indicated some caution in those figures as potentially over-estimating the ongoing impact of reduced migration caused by both Brexit and the pandemic. In September 2021 and 2022 entry into the borough's schools were above the forecast for those years. During this period Camden schools also welcomed many Afghan and Ukrainian families as part of the Afghan resettlement and the Homes for Ukraine programmes. Whilst a number of these pupils have relocated within the UK, a proportion have also settled within Camden and bolstered pupil numbers as a result. As the national position has stabilised our local position has taken account of these trends and our most recent forecasts indicate a more consistent position and now show an increase in pupil demand towards the end of the decade.

The forecast data does however still show suppressed birth rates within London and Camden alongside the continued effect of reductions in families moving into Camden during the COVID period.

In the primary phase the number of unused reception places is estimated to go from 7% in 2023/24 to 13% by the middle of the decade before falling to 4% by 2032/33. Whilst in the secondary phase, without any action by the council or schools, unused year 7 places are estimated to increase from 10% in 2023/24 to 21% by 2032/3.

Your schools will continue to receive further details of all the analysis that forms part of forecasting future demand. In addition, the council has set up a school place planning group of key officers and school leaders that will meet to interrogate the data and review any proposals relating to school organisation that are brought forward. Importantly this work will also include, and link in with, the council's implementation of its SEND strategy and sufficiency planning for specialist places for pupils with additional need.

If you, or your wider governing body, want any further information about this work please do not hesitate to contact nicholas.smith@camden.gov.uk.



PRIMARY TO SECONDARY TRANSITION

Camden Learning has recently launched *Say Hello, Wave Goodbye* - a new good practice guide on helping children move successfully from primary to secondary school.

[Read the primary to secondary transition good practice guide for schools](#)

We have also created an [informative guide for parents](#) to help them through the process. It's important that this guidance gets to as many primary parents as possible.

We presented the guide at the last Governors' forum.

This fulfils a pledge in 'Building Back Stronger' and supports our work to close attainment gaps.

You may wish to programme in a governing body discussion on primary to secondary transition this year. Has your primary school got enough links with secondary schools (or vice versa)? Are there new initiatives you could try?



PROTECTED CHARACTERISTIC STATUS FOR CARE EXPERIENCED RESIDENTS

Camden councillors have taken the decision to award care experienced people in the borough 'Protected Characteristic' status.

This means that children in care, care leavers or any resident with experience of care will have the same protection locally from discrimination as other characteristics under the Equality Act.

Care experienced young people in Camden should feel truly supported by all local institutions and are enabled to thrive.

To realise that vision, the council wants to empower partners, including schools, to act as [corporate parents](#) for Camden's children in care and care leavers.

Care experienced young people need tailored support to realise their potential in accessing education, employment and training. All council services are now considering how their policies and programmes might affect them.

Could your school do the same? Initial ideas could be:

- Creating a care-conscious workforce
- Raising awareness in schools around what it means to grow up in care and debunking some of the stigma and stereotypes

- Keep working closely with the [Virtual School](#) in giving extra support to looked after children to make sure they achieve their educational potential
- Adopting a trauma-informed approach to supporting pupils who are growing up in care

We had a very useful discussion about care experience at the last school Governor's Briefing earlier this month. Thanks to those who attended and shared their ideas.

Ideas ranged from making sure that children in care have a safe person to talk to in schools that follow them throughout the years, having a focus on transition from primary to secondary and making sure this cohort is considered alongside other vulnerable groups when looking at their academic achievements.

There was also some thinking around recruiting a care experienced young person to be part of the Young Governors' programme (read more about young governors on [page 8](#)).

If you are interested in learning more, please contact Hannah.Raffin@camden.gov.uk

Although young people's participation in the RRSA can contribute to a range of positive outcomes, there is an explicit link to Camden's Building Back Stronger education strategy and the ambition for young people to leave school as:

"socially and morally responsible changemakers, who not only understand their rights and respect the rights of others but are also able to contribute actively to their community and to the planet"

Participation is also aligned with Camden Learning's 'curriculum plus' enrichment pledge, with one of its twelve promises being to give every pupil in a Camden school the opportunity to:

"understand and feel part of a global and diverse world"

Impact [evidence](#) also shows that children and young people who know about their rights are more inclusive of others and actively promote and celebrate diversity in all its forms - 93% of headteachers report some noticeable or significant impact on children and young people having "improved respect for themselves and for others".

Children's wellbeing and self-esteem are also enhanced and their appreciation of diversity is strengthened. In addition, capacity for resolving disagreements grows and where adults need to intervene use of rights language helps to de-escalate situations and enables bridges to be found to sustainable resolutions.

The Rights Respecting framework is already being used by some Camden schools and our [Camden Conversation](#) last term reported on a study of some

of this work in practice. In all four Camden schools that took part in the study the RRSA work runs throughout the curriculum. These schools have also used it as a starting point for teaching children about challenging topics. At Torriano and Brecknock this has included the Windrush scandal and the impact of discrimination.

The new steering group – which includes school leaders, inclusion leads, council officers and members of the Camden Learning's inclusion team – has set out its purpose and terms of reference as being to:

- promote children's rights across the borough and adoption of rights respecting principles in schools within their locality
- work with UNICEF UK's professional adviser to promote and monitor the uptake to the RRSA across the borough
- promote collaboration among schools through hosting sharing events where schools can showcase their approach to promoting children's rights, including the RRSA
- participate and organise cross-borough events to showcase different approaches to promoting children's rights, including the RRSA

The group also elected Katy Forsdyke, Headteacher at Christ Church Primary School, in Hampstead as its Chair.

You can find out more about the Rights Respecting framework and the RRSA [here](#).

CAMDEN LAUNCHES CHILDREN'S RIGHTS STEERING GROUP

This half term Camden Learning has hosted our first child rights steering group meeting as part of a London-wide approach promoted by the city's Mayor.

This group will work with a UNICEF professional adviser to promote children's rights across the borough and the adoption of rights respecting principles in schools.



The shared language of rights and respect builds stronger, more inclusive school communities and equips both young people and adults with a shared language for conflict resolution.

As part of London's Inclusion Charter, the Rights Respecting Schools Awards (RRSA) is a programme which provides a framework to embed children's rights into schools and is free to all state-funded education settings in Camden.

The awards aim to bring about system change in schools and require children (as rights holders) and adults (as duty bearers for child rights) to know and understand the rights set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

GLOBAL MAJORITY GOVERNORS' NETWORK

The network aimed at governors from underrepresented backgrounds, with particular emphasis on those from Black, Asian or mixed ethnicity, is meeting again on **Thursday 6 June in Islington**.

Meetings are lively, thought-provoking and supportive. [Register here](#) if you would like to attend.

DIVERSITY SURVEY

This year's diversity survey will follow the same format as 2023 and will take place in June and July. Please fill in the form you will only need to do it once.



NEW GOVERNANCE GUIDES

Two new documents have replaced the Governance Handbook. They are:

- [Academy Trust Governance Guide](#)
- [Maintained School Governance Guide](#)

This makes for clearer delineation of the legal requirements on governors and consistent and manageable expectations for each sector.

While the Statutory Policies List has been absorbed into both guides, a number of documents have been simultaneously withdrawn, including the Governor and Clerking Competency Framework.

All governors should read the relevant new guide. Key areas of clarification are:

- that individual governors do not have an automatic right to enter the school whenever they wish and that school visits should be in line with School Improvement Priorities (SIP) and for an identified purpose linked to the board's responsibilities, such as safeguarding
- a new section on chair's action, which is the chair's power to take decisions alone in emergencies
- information on governance professionals/clerks

More information is available in the slide pack presented to the Chairs' Network which is available at the [Governor Hub](#) with the papers and recording of this term's governor briefing.

YOUNG GOVERNORS' PROGRAMME

We will be launching the Camden Young Governors' Programme this summer after surveys showed a low number of young people involved on Camden governing bodies.

There were only 25% of governors under 45 in 2023 and the age profile of Camden governing bodies also impacts other areas of representation and diversity.

With support from Camden Council, the programme will recruit and train a cohort of people aged between 18-30 to serve as associate members on governing bodies. They will be recruited and supported by [Governors for Schools](#) and undertake the Pathways to Governance programme. There will be a programme of support and networking through the year and the opportunity to extend placements.

The scheme promises to improve diversity of thought and representation and connect governing bodies with young people.

If your governing body would be interested in this initiative, please register for the seminar on Tuesday 18 June at 6pm via Emma Hawker at emma.hawker@governorsforschools.org.uk



RICHARD COBDEN COMPOSING PROJECT

Year 3 held a special music assembly this week to celebrate their achievements collaborating with the English National Opera (ENO) on a composing project.

The children at Richard Cobden Primary School outlined the project journey and shared the outcomes of their composing work (which has been published by the ENO) with the audience. The children were awarded achievement certificates by the ENO and enjoyed a surprised congratulations video!



DEVELOPING THE ROLE OF A FAMILY SUPPORT WORKER

Case study: Fleet Primary School

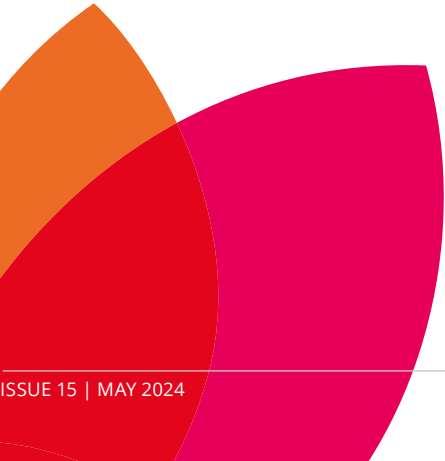
The decision to create a completely new role in our school came about as a legacy from the pandemic.

During the pandemic, as with schools across the country, we became much more than an educational setting for our families and we found ourselves being asked (and offering) support to families in ways we had not done before – such as ensuring food, financial, emotional and other support was available. We became the 'front line' – the trusted vital link between vulnerable families and emergency support services.

Post Covid, we noticed that the issues that were affecting our families had not gone away, in fact with the cost of living crisis, they had got worse. Many were

and are still experiencing financial hardship, poor health (including mental health) and were struggling with legal or employment issues, as well as housing and overcrowding. This in turn was impacting their children who were often coming to school hungry and anxious, and we also saw a rise in poor and intermittent absence.

We knew that our families trusted us in a way that they might not trust other organisations, and we felt that an 'in-house' Family Support Worker was a valuable role to create in our school. Not only to be a direct link to local support services, but also to be equipped to pick up on families needing support before they reach a point of crisis – to be able to identify those hidden needs.



Our Family Support Worker, Lisa, works three days a week in this role, and the remainder of the week resumes her admin role in the school office. Lisa has been trained in many areas since starting the role – from being able to administer ESOL assessments, grant applications, to being able to refer families for the Camden Cost of Living Grant.

Lisa is part of the Camden family support worker network and has formed links with the Citizens Advice Bureau, Families for Life, Family Kitchen, Camden Digital Skills team as well as other local schools. She organises drop-in sessions at school on healthy eating, life admin and first aid and has also secured grants and vouchers to pay for food, children's toys and furniture.

So far we have 79 families who have been supported directly by Lisa – just over 50% of our families.

It's an incredibly worthwhile role, but funding this position is difficult from the existing school budget, so we are looking to secure funding through grant applications.

Don McGibbon
Headteacher, Fleet Primary School



**NEWSLETTER NO 16 WILL BE
PUBLISHED IN JULY 2024**

Ideas for items all welcome, please send to:
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