

The governors' role in the safe opening of schools

In the world of governance, it is not, currently, business as usual. To ensure you are doing all you can to adapt to these strange times we thought we would draw your attention to a number of helpful resources.

The NGA have sent a message to governors and trustees, entitled 'The governing board's role in the safe opening of schools for more pupils'. In it, they confirm where responsibility lies, and provide seven helpful reminders, which we would encourage you to read in full here :

<https://www.nga.org.uk/Home.aspx> but we have shared a flavour of each below:

- The final decision on whether to invite pupils back will rest with schools and academy trusts.
- Re-opening a school is an operational decision which is taken by school leaders.
- The headteacher will need to undertake a full risk assessment before making a decision
- In developing the options, a board would be reasonable in expecting school leaders to have consulted staff and parents
- We would also expect a school leader to discuss the options with the chair and the vice chair of the governing board, using them as sounding boards for this very difficult decision.
- Governing boards, and chairs in particular, may be asked to support the communications to the whole school community – staff, parents and more widely. Chairs may be asked to co-sign letters from the headteacher/CEO.
- These are extremely difficult decisions to take and it is imperative that school leaders and chairs of governing boards maintain regular contact. We are aware of much wonderful school leadership over the past two months, but this must not be taken for granted and it is crucial that their well-being is not being compromised. As you are no doubt aware, governing boards owe a duty of care to staff, and in particular to their senior leader.

The NGA also report they have suggested that the DfE needs to produce guidance specifically for governing boards and tell us they are expecting this later in the week.

In addition, The Key, usually only available for subscribers, have made available some useful guidance for governing boards. In their piece 'Coronavirus: what your board needs to do now' , which can be found here : <https://schoolgovernors.thekeysupport.com/curriculum-and-pupils/pastoral-care/health-and-medical-needs/coronavirus-what-your-board-needs-be-doing-now/>, there are some sensible, practical suggestions related to how your role may need to be adapted during Covid-19.