



Clerks' Monthly Briefing

January 2023



Strong teamwork between the headteacher, the chair of the governing body and the clerk is crucial to efficient working.

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The role of the clerk is pivotal to ensuring that statutory duties are met, meetings are well organised and governors receive the information they need in good time. Consequently, governors come to meetings well prepared and with pertinent questions ready so that they are able to provide constructive challenge.

Ofsted, Learning from the Best 2011.



Governor Support Service

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Agenda

Happy New Year

➤ Welcome new clerks	➤ Information exchange
➤ Help us to help you	➤ Updates
➤ Clerking vacancies	➤ Your questions

Governor Support Service

We hold a database of maintained school and academy governing boards which helps us to help you. Such information is needed for governor recruitment purposes, in cases of urgency, safeguarding, Ofsted inspections, and schools where there is a cause for concern. All data is stored and accessed in accordance with the Data Protection Act and GDPR. The only piece of information we can give out publicly is the name of the Chair of the Governing Board, which is already in the public domain. We do not give out personal contact details or any other information.

With contact details changing each term, please let us have a complete list of all your GB membership including:

- Category of governor
- Contact phone numbers (mobile & home)
- Who is chair and vice chair
- Term of office
- Email address
- Details of any associate members of the board (inc. contact details and term of office)

Please send your Governing Board membership information to: office@governor.support

Instruments of Government (IOG)

Please send us a copy of any changes made to your IOG.

Get Information About Schools (GIAS)

Please make sure that you keep the DfE site updated with your governing board membership as well.

Your governing board minutes

Please send us a copy of your draft board and committee minutes once approved by your chair of governors and the final agreed minutes. Email: office@governor.support

School email addresses

Please can you check with your school that our email addresses are on the “White” allowed list? This issue happens more often with “LGFL” school emails.

Spring 2023 Term Governor & Clerk Training Courses

Please can you remind your governors of the range of courses that are available, also that they feedback on the course(s) attended to the governing board and to update your training records. Your minutes need to show what learning was achieved and shared with all governors. Check the courses [here](#).

Agenda reminders

Items to consider

- ✓ Budget outturn and considerations for the new financial year
- ✓ Energy support from April 2023
- ✓ SFVS
- ✓ Pupil Attendance
- ✓ Exclusions
- ✓ Pupil premium
- ✓ PE and Sport premium
- ✓ Review policies and update as necessary
- ✓ What schools must publish

Department for Education (DfE)

DfE School Governance update 16th December

Funding

Additional Funding in the Autumn Statement

In his Autumn Statement, the Chancellor announced an additional £2.3Bn of funding in both 2023/24 and 2024/25 for school budgets in England, a rise from £53.8Bn this year to £58.8Bn by 2025. The increase means that the amount of funding schools receive per pupil will rise, on average, by over £1,000 by 2024/25, compared to 2021/22, restoring per-pupil funding to the level it was in 2010.

Research by the Confederation of School Trusts (CST) has found that higher-than-expected, unfunded pay offers for staff, spiralling energy costs and inflation have led to huge “budget blackholes”. This scenario is also reflective of the financial circumstances facing many Local Authority maintained schools.

The CST’s analysis of budget forecast submissions and survey responses found that if current cost pressures remained the same, more than 50% of Trusts could be in deficit by 2024/25, whilst average reserves could fall as low as 1-1.5%. As a result, Trusts are already looking to make spending cuts, including reducing the curriculum offer, increasing class sizes and closing specialist facilities in specialist and alternative provision schools.

****Schools will get energy support from April, but only those paying the highest rates will benefit and financial support has been vastly scaled back.**

The government confirmed on 9th January schools will get support after the current £18 billion energy bill relief scheme ends in March, alongside other public sector bodies, charities and businesses.

However, fewer schools are eligible under the new Energy Bills Discount Scheme, which runs for 12 months from April 1.

Under the new scheme, only those paying above £107 per megawatt hour for gas or £302/MWh for electricity will receive help, automatically applied to bills.

The previous scheme had significantly lower thresholds of £75 per unit of gas and £211 for electricity.

Pupil Premium Funding

The Government has confirmed that from April 2023, pupil premium funding will increase as follows:

- An uplift of £70 for each eligible primary school pupil to £1,455.
 - An uplift of £50 for each eligible secondary school pupil to £1,035.
 - An uplift of £120 for each Looked After Child to £2,530.
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Energy Efficiency

Schools and colleges in England will be allocated a share of £500M to spend on energy efficiency upgrades, helping to save money on utility bills during the winter months and manage energy consumption. Estimations show that on average, a primary school will receive c. £16K and a secondary school will receive c. £42K. Improvements could include installing better heating controls, insulation to reduce heat loss from pipes or switching to energy efficient lighting.

This builds on the Government's Energy Relief Scheme which is supporting schools/colleges this winter, running until April 2023.

December 2022 also saw the DfE issue new guidance to support schools to maximise energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions and improve sustainability and resilience this winter and beyond. The guidance shows how schools and colleges can reduce their energy, costs, and carbon use by:

- understanding energy usage and conducting an audit to target where they can save energy;
- developing a plan using information from their energy audit to encourage good practice, behaviour, and further interventions; and
- implementing and managing the proposed interventions to reduce energy consumption.

This guidance can be accessed here :[Energy efficiency: guidance for the school and further education college estate](#)

[Schools financial benchmarking](#)

Compare a school or trust's income and expenditure with similar establishments in England.

You can view your school or academy trust's financial data, see how it compares with others and use the information to establish relationships with other schools or multi-academy trusts.

Schools Bill

The Education Secretary confirmed that the Schools Bill would not progress in its current form but stated that certain elements would be prioritised as the Government considers its legislative programme. Despite this non-progression, Gillian Keegan stated that the DfE “remains committed to the objectives” that underpinned the Schools Bill.

The Government still hopes to introduce powers and duties over home, private and illegal schooling, teacher misconduct and pupils not in school. It will also seek to revive plans removing barriers to faith and grammar schools joining MATs and push national funding formula reforms without legislation. **But the remaining academy reforms that required new laws will no longer progress, including new academy standards and trust intervention powers.** As a result, the academy regulatory review group, set up to determine what new academy standards should look like and shape future powers, will now simply define what a “strong trust” looks like.

The other big question for ministers is how far the bill’s non-progression undermines the March 2022 White Paper vision for all schools to join a strong MAT by 2030.

Also at the Education Committee meeting, the Education Secretary confirmed that:

- DfE officials have been tasked with looking into the feasibility of undergraduate apprenticeships for physics and maths teachers. Whilst a postgraduate teaching apprenticeship exists, discussions about an apprenticeship route for those without a degree have previously had little success.
 - The Government won’t pursue the lifting of the ban on new grammar schools.
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Capacity Checks

It is understood that Ministers plan to send capacity checkers into all secondary schools to see if they can fit in more pupils. Local Authorities could then use the updated numbers to “force” schools to take more pupils. Government officials, it is alleged, also believe the checks would help to boost funding because of schools taking in more pupils and would relieve pressure on the Government to build new schools to meet any rise in pupil numbers.

A pilot involving “net capacity assessment” visits in more than 200 mainstream schools found 6,000 potential extra places. It is understood that the DfE now plans to carry out two years of assessments at 4,500 secondary and special schools from May 2023. Secondary schools would be prioritised because of increased place pressure in recent years.

Officials will contract “data collection organisations” to measure room size and usage through an updated net capacity assessment tool and methodology. Whilst these visits will not be mandatory, officials will “strongly encourage” schools to take up the offer. Funding sign-off is expected early this year.

Pupil attendance and absence in schools in England

Data on the levels of attendance and overall, authorised, and unauthorised absence in state-funded primary, secondary and special schools.

The attendance rate was 88.9% across all schools in the **week commencing 5 December 2022**. The absence rate was, therefore, 11.1% across all schools.

The increase in the absence rate has been driven by illness absence, which during week commencing 5 December 2022 was 7.5%, up from 6.1% in the previous week and 2.6% at the start of term. This is in line with recent increases in rates of [seasonal flu and other seasonal respiratory illnesses](#).

By school type, the absence rates across the week were:

- 9.5% in state-funded primary schools (7.8% authorised and 1.7% unauthorised)
- 12.9% in state-funded secondary schools (9.2% authorised and 3.7% unauthorised)
- 17.1% in state-funded special schools (14.0% authorised and 3.1% unauthorised)

The data shows that the attendance rate across the **academic year to date** was 92.7%. The absence rate was, therefore, 7.3% across all schools.

By school type, the absence rates across the year to date were:

- 6.0% in state-funded primary schools (4.6% authorised and 1.4% unauthorised)
- 8.8% in state-funded secondary schools (5.8% authorised and 2.9% unauthorised)
- 12.9% in state-funded special schools (10.0% authorised and 2.8% unauthorised)

Exclusions

The latest DfE exclusions release provides data from the autumn term 2021/22. Prior to this release, data was published on an annual basis covering the whole academic year. This data will next be updated with spring term 2021/22 data in April 2023, followed by a full year release covering the whole of the 2021/22 academic year in July 2023, like previous years.

The autumn term data shows

- An increase in permanent exclusions compared to previous terms. In autumn 2021/22, there were 2,100 permanent exclusions, up from 1,700 in the previous autumn term. This, however, remains lower than pre-pandemic levels; autumn 2019/20 saw 3,200 permanent exclusions. Data for previous years shows that the number of permanent exclusions is typically higher in autumn term than in spring and summer.

- The number of permanent exclusions is highest in secondary schools, making up 88% of permanent exclusions in autumn 2021/22.
- The rate of permanent exclusions is 0.03, equivalent to 3 permanent exclusions for every 10,000 pupils.
- Suspensions have also increased with 183,800 in autumn term 2021/22 (autumn 2020/21: 160,000 suspensions). Unlike permanent exclusions, the suspension figures for 2021/22 were higher than the final pre-pandemic autumn term when there were 178,400 suspensions. Again, suspensions are typically higher in the autumn term than in spring and summer.
- The increase in suspensions was seen across all school types. Compared to the previous autumn term, suspensions
 - Increased by 15% for secondary pupils
 - Increased by 13% for primary pupils
 - Increased by 11% for special school pupils
- 47% of suspensions issued in the autumn term were for one day or less and 99% of suspensions were for one week or less.
- The suspension rate was 2.21, equivalent to 221 suspensions for every 10,000 pupils.
- Again, the most common reason for suspensions and permanent exclusions was persistent disruptive behaviour at 41% and 31% of all suspensions and permanent exclusions respectively.
- **With respect to pupil characteristics, the data release identified that:**
 - **Gender:** male pupils have a higher permanent exclusion rate than female pupils whilst the suspension rate for male pupils is almost double that for female pupils.
 - **Free School Meals:** the suspension rate for FSM eligible pupils is almost 4 times that for non-FSM eligible pupils. The permanent exclusion rate for FSM eligible pupils is 0.07, compared to 0.01 without.
 - **SEN:** the highest rate of suspensions is among those pupils with an EHCP at 6.37, followed by those with SEN without an EHCP at 6.31. This compares to 1.44 for pupils with no SEN. The highest rate of permanent exclusions is among those pupils who have SEN but no EHCP (SEN support) at 0.08.
 - **Year group:** the suspensions and permanent exclusions rate tends to increase as age and year group increase with the highest rate for each in Year 10, before a small drop in Year 11 for both.

The full statistical release can be accessed via

[Permanent exclusions and suspensions in England: autumn term 2021 to 2022 update](#)

[PowerPoint presentation available on Exclusions, please email or call us if you need a copy](#)

Use of Covid Catch Up Funding

Research conducted by UCL, and the Sutton Trust argues that schools should be able to use their catch-up funding to provide mental health support for pupils. The research also points to a link between teenagers reporting the worst mental health in the aftermath of the pandemic and levels of motivation to study.

More than two in five, or 44%, of 16 to 17-year-olds in England were found to have “probable” mental ill health, classed as having high levels of psychological distress. This is nine percentage points higher than the 35% reporting distress at age 17-18 in a similar 2017 study by UCL’s Centre for Longitudinal Studies.

The Covid Social Mobility & Opportunities Study (COSMO) looked at how events during the pandemic years had impacted the mental wellbeing of the 2021/22 GCSE cohort. Academics say mental health and wellbeing support should be added to catch-up activities in schools, with “specific interventions for those with existing mental health issues who feel that the pandemic has affected their academic progress”. They also state that a proportion of the catch-up funding should be added to school funding allocations and ringfenced for mental health support.

Mental Health Training Funding – A Reminder

The DfE is offering a grant of £1,200 for eligible state-funded schools to train a senior mental health lead to develop and implement a whole school approach to mental health/wellbeing. Whilst this training isn’t compulsory, it is part of the Government’s commitment to offer this training to all eligible schools by 2025.

Eligible schools are now able to apply for this grant to commence training within the current financial year (up to 31.3.23). Has your school taken up this funding?

Children’s Mental Health Week 2023 will take place from 6-12 February 2023

Governing board responsibilities

The Governance Handbook outlines governing boards’ statutory duty to promote wellbeing.

‘Wellbeing’ includes:

- physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing
- protection from harm and neglect
- education, training, and recreation
- the contribution children make to society
- social and economic wellbeing Mental health and wellbeing should also be considered as part of governing boards’ statutory safeguarding responsibilities outlined in Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)
- safeguarding includes “preventing the impairment of children’s mental and physical health or development” and “taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

Questions to ask

Is our approach to wellbeing reflected in our vision, values, and ethos?

Is our school a place where pupils feel safe and listened to? How do we know?

How aware is the school community of the importance of promoting good mental health?

Are there trusted adults that children can turn to when they are troubled?

Are there visible signs around school to show mental health and wellbeing is a priority?

Multiplication Check

The DfE has published statistics for the attainment of year 4 pupils who took the multiplication tables check in summer 2022. This is the first statistical publication of the multiplication tables check after the assessment became statutory in 2021/22. Key highlights include:

- Of the Y4 pupils who took the check, the mean average score was 19.8 out of 25.
- The most common score in the check was 25 (full marks), with 27% of pupils achieving this score.
- Disadvantaged pupils performed less well in the check than other pupils. Of the pupils who took the check, the average score for disadvantaged pupils was 17.9, while the average score for pupils not known to be disadvantaged was 20.5.
- Pupils whose first language is English performed less well in the check than pupils with a first language other than English. Of pupils who took the check, the average score for pupils with a first language of English was 19.4 while the average score for pupils with a first language other than English was 21.2.
- London was the highest performing region, with an average score of 20.9. In other regions, the average score ranged from 19.1 in the South West to 19.9 in the North West and the West Midlands.

Further breakdown of this data can be found [here](#)

[What academies, free schools and colleges must or should publish online](#) - 15 December

- Admission arrangements
- School uniforms
- Ofsted reports
- Test, exam, and assessment results
- Performance measures website
- School opening hours
- Curriculum
- Remote education
- Behaviour policy
- Pupil premium and recovery premium
- PE and sport premium for primary schools
- Public sector equality duty
- Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- Careers programme information
- Complaints policy
- Annual reports and accounts
- Executive pay
- Trustees' information and duties
- Charging and remissions policies
- Values and ethos
- Requests for paper copies
- School or college contact details

What maintained schools must publish online

The information that schools maintained by their local authorities must or should publish on their websites.

- Schools that do not have a website
- Contact details
- Admission arrangements
- School uniforms
- Ofsted reports
- Test, exam, and assessment results
- Performance measures website
- School opening hours
- Curriculum
- Remote education
- Behaviour policy
- Pupil premium and recovery premium
- PE and sport premium for primary schools
- Public sector equality duty
- Special educational needs and disability (SEND) information
- Careers programme information
- Complaints procedure
- Governors' information and duties
- Financial information
- Charging and remissions policies
- Values and ethos
- Requests for paper copies

Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) - January 4th 2023 update

- A reminder to all trusts that the deadline to submit your trust's accounts return is Thursday 19 January 2023.
 - Information: schools, high needs, and early years funding 2023 to 2024
 - Pupil premium allocations 2022 to 2023
 - The cost of the [Risk Protection Arrangement \(RPA\)](#) is reviewed annually to ensure breadth of cover and value for money are balanced. The department can confirm that the RPA deduction will be £23 per pupil:
 - from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 for Local Authority Maintained Schools (LAMS)
 - from 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024 for academies.
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Annual Report

December saw Ofsted release its Annual Report for the 2021/22 academic year. The report considered:

The **ongoing impact of covid** on schools, with Ofsted's Chief Inspector acknowledging that:

- England's youngest children were hit particularly hard, having lived much of their lives in a time of social distancing, mask-wearing and limited interaction. This delayed some children's speech and language and slowed their social development with children arriving at school with a wider range of starting points than normal.
- After such an extended period of stop-start remote education, many children and learners had made less progress than usual.
- Staffing shortages compounded the problem with covid related staff absences leaving gaps not easily filled by the limited number of supply teachers. Managing with fewer staff slowed the pace of intervention. It also delayed the return of sports, drama, music, and other programmes that are normally part of the school experience.
- Young people with SEND found that services such as speech and language therapy and mental health support were not always available. There were also delays in EHCPs.

Early years providers are now focusing more on addressing the gaps in children's learning. They are identifying the children who have missed learning opportunities and are helping them to catch up by:

- creating more opportunities for interactions between adults and children that help children to develop their speech and language;
- refocusing their curriculum on language and communication, for children who have fallen behind in language development;
- creating more opportunities for staff to read to children and talk to them about the books they read; and
- providing as many opportunities as they can for children to mix with others and build their confidence in social situations.

Some early years providers have a better understanding than others of the concept of curriculum. These providers know to plan a curriculum that defines what they want children to learn and be able to do. However, the weakest providers often do not know what a coherent curriculum looks like, or how to implement it. Where providers struggle to implement a curriculum, this may be linked to recruitment issues and reliance on less-experienced staff.

Schools have worked hard to overcome the challenges of the pandemic. This year slightly more schools have achieved a judgement of good or outstanding at their most recent inspection than last year. Nonetheless, covid continues to have an impact with pupils' learning, attendance, mental and physical health, and personal development remaining areas of concern. Schools have also continued to experience covid related staff absences and recruitment issues.

Overall, 88% of all state-funded schools were judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection, a slight increase from 86% in 2021.

The proportion of good and outstanding primary schools increased slightly from 88% to 89% this year and the proportion of good and outstanding secondary schools increased from 77% to 80%. This was mainly because many schools that previously required improvement were judged good this year. This more than offset the smaller number of previously exempt outstanding schools that were judged as requires improvement or inadequate.

That said, Ofsted are concerned that 64% of all schools have not had a graded inspection in the last five academic years and 14% have not had one in the last 10 academic years. This is due to a combination of factors, including: most inspections of good schools since 2015 have been ungraded inspections; outstanding schools were exempt from routine inspection between 2012 and 2020; and schools that become academies are not reinspected until their third year as an academy, irrespective of the date of their last inspection.

Most schools that did not retain an outstanding grade were also judged less than outstanding for the quality of education and leadership and management. In some schools that did not retain an outstanding grade, the curriculum was not accessible for all pupils, particularly those with SEND.

Schools that improved:

- made sure that their curriculum was ambitious and well sequenced;
- identified the precise knowledge that they wanted pupils to learn;
- had leaders and Governors who had a clear understanding of what the school did well and how it could improve; and
- gave staff opportunities to share expertise and access subject-specific professional development and networking opportunities.

Covid has continued to affect pupils' attendance this year, due to anxiety among pupils and parents as well as families taking rescheduled holidays during term time. In some cases, attendance has also been affected directly by illness or pupils self-isolating. In addition, the number of pupils identified as persistent absentees increased. In autumn 2021, almost one in four pupils missed at least 10% of sessions, equivalent to around seven days in the autumn term. It is particularly concerning that around one in 70 pupils missed 50% or more possible school sessions in autumn 2021, up from around one in 120 in autumn 2019.

In many primary schools, children in Reception, Yrs 1 and 2 are still catching up. For example, speech and language development are behind compared to before the pandemic. Some pupils in Reception are not as used to sharing and taking turns, and more work is needed to develop pupils' listening skills. In the summer 2022 KS2 national curriculum tests, pupils' attainment fell in all subjects, other than reading, between 2019 and 2022. Some Yr 6 pupils were not as ready for secondary school as they usually would be, and their transition to Year 7 was affected. Secondary schools highlighted concerns about some Year 7 pupils still catching up on learning from KS2; this was especially evident in reading.

Ofsted found that, in the first instance, schools typically considered using a tuition partner when using their catch-up funding. However, most schools have shifted to using school-led tutoring because it gives schools more autonomy in setting up tutoring and allowing them to control the content of tutoring sessions to better meet pupils' academic needs. They could also make sure that tuition was well aligned with the school's main curriculum.

Primary schools often provide tutoring during the school day. The strongest schools make sure that this does not disrupt the regular school curriculum too much. Secondary schools tend to provide tutoring before or after school. Attendance can be low when tutoring takes place outside of school hours, so it is important for schools to promote the benefits of tutoring to parents.

The system of provision for **children with SEND** continues to have significant weaknesses, even though many individual providers are good. Many children, young people, and families experience significant delays and difficulties in accessing support, particularly wider health, and therapeutic services. They frequently have a frustrating and adversarial experience of the system. These issues, and the effect on children and young people with SEND, have intensified during the pandemic.

Delays in assessing children and young people for EHCPs are a persistent problem, caused by rising demand, staff absences and recruitment issues. In 2021, only 60% of EHCPs were issued within the 20-week statutory limit, the same as in 2018 and 2019. That said, there is substantial variation between local authorities.

Ofsted's full annual report can be accessed [here](#)

Careers Provision

The Government has asked Ofsted to carry out a thematic review of careers guidance for young people in schools and further education and skills providers. Ofsted will review careers guidance in both mainstream provision and specialist settings, such as special schools and alternative provision.

Ofsted's thematic review will:

- Assess the quality of careers guidance available;
- Inform relevant stakeholders, including policymakers and providers, about the quality of careers education, information, advice and guidance;
- Identify strengths and weaknesses in careers provision across the board and make recommendations to improve practice; and
- Help to identify potential developments in inspectors' training and guidance and help share good practice and thinking across the inspectorate.

Specifically, the review will consider:

- How well do leaders
 - fulfil their statutory duties to provide independent careers guidance?
 - ensure that careers education is of high quality?
- To what extent do schools and further education and skills providers
 - engage with stakeholders (such as employers, careers networks and other providers)?

- ensure that careers education contributes to local, regional, and national opportunities and skills needs?
- How does the curriculum help learners make informed choices about their future education, employment, and training?

Ofsted's review will be published in autumn 2023.

Inspection Data Summary Reports

These have now been updated for both primary and secondary schools, reflecting the national curriculum and public examination results from summer 2022. The IDSRs were further updated in December 2022 for absence data for 2021/22 (autumn and spring terms).

Do all your Trustees/Governors know how to read and analyse their school's IDSR? Ofsted have updated their guide for navigating the IDSR which can be accessed [here](#)

Ofsted

Secondary colleagues to note:

The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

National School Governance Awareness Day - 28th February 2023

This year's National School Governors' Awareness Day will take place on 28th February and will feature an exciting and informative programme of events throughout the day which aim to celebrate, develop, and inspire those in governance across the country. What's even better is there is no charge at all to get involved; it is free to all.

Late news

Inspiring Governance

Join a free webinar hosted by the charity Inspiring Governance on Wednesday 25th January, 12.00-13.00 to learn more about the role and hear from a panel of current school governors sharing their own experiences of volunteering in the role – sign up [here](#) to join the webinar.

Ofsted

Governance and Inspection, Nov/Dec 2022 [YouTube video](#) (lasts approx. 47 minutes)

DfE and Ofsted

Staff who are members of the Public & Commercial Services Union are holding a one-day strike on 1st February 2023

Ballot results awaited :

On strike action by the following teaching unions: NEU, NASUWT, & NAHT

Spring term 2023 Clerks briefing meeting dates your diary

Wednesday 22nd February 2023 at 10.00am

Wednesday 22nd March 2023 at 10.00am

Please book a place [here](#)

Edited from material from: BBC, Department for Education, Fischer Family Trust, Information Commissioners Office, London Borough of Hillingdon, National Governance Association, NHS, Ofsted, Schoolsweek, The Times, Times Educational Supple

