



Clerks' Monthly Briefing

May 2023



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

Ofsted, Learning from the Best 2011.



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

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ➤ 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 (General Data Protection Regulation). 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 (Governing Board) 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 (Department for Education) 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.

Summer 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

- ✓ Staffing arrangements for September
- ✓ Budget approval and return to the local authority
- ✓ Length of school day
- ✓ Review Service Level Agreements
- ✓ [What must be published online](#)
- ✓ Governing board diversity
- ✓ Pupil Attendance in school, ([latest DfE data](#))
- ✓ [Pupil premium](#)
- ✓ Exclusions
- ✓ RSHE (Relationships, Sex and Health Education) policy and publication
- ✓ Review policies and update as necessary
- ✓ Data protection

Department for Education (DfE)



To mark the Coronation all state funded primary schools will be sent [wildflower seeds](#) that will empower children across the country to discover the joys of nature.

Each seed packet covers around 2 square metres of blue, white, purple, red, and yellow flowers that can be planted in pots, beds, or borders. [Information](#)

[Every state school in England are allocated extra funding for the next academic year](#)

A typical primary school will receive approximately £35,000 and a typical secondary school approximately £200,000, with the first payments by the 10th May. The majority of this funding is allocated on a per-pupil basis, and disadvantaged pupils attract additional funding to their school. The allocations also factor in differences in wage costs between areas.

Schools can choose how to invest the extra funding, however it is primarily expected to support salary uplifts for teachers and teaching assistants and help with increased running costs, school trips and learning materials. [Information](#)

Providing a 32.5-hour school week from September 2023

A reminder for governing boards to discuss the length of the school day with leaders in their school or trust. The expectation is that state-funded mainstream schools currently offering a school week of below 32.5 hours should work towards increasing their hours to provide at least 32.5 hours by September at the latest.

Note that this is not a statutory requirement, rather it is an expectation set out in the government white paper last year, that the majority of schools already meet and which Ofsted will consider when evaluating the quality of education.

The Study of Maths

In announcing the review, the Prime Minister accepted that more maths teachers were needed but that this was "not going to happen overnight". Experts recently told MPs that 12% of secondary school lessons in England are taught by someone who has not studied any higher in that subject than A-level themselves. Furthermore, targets to recruit new trainee teachers have not been met for more than a decade, despite being lowered since 2019. The Education Secretary has said that the number of maths teachers required would depend on the advisory group's findings.

It is expected that the advisory group will report back with recommendations for improving the maths curriculum around July, with a delivery plan then announced later in the year.

The Prime Minister has also committed to introducing voluntary qualification for teachers leading maths in primary schools and extending the c.40 Maths Hubs across England, which aim to improve the standard of maths teaching.

Almost a third of 16-year-olds in England fail GCSE maths each year and face compulsory resits in college. The resit pass rate is about one in five.

Watch this space for further details! [Information](#)

Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Guidance

March saw the Prime Minister announce that the Government was bringing forward a review of the statutory RSHE guidance for schools. **Current guidance**, which came into effect in September 2020, was already due to be reviewed later this year. Now, draft, updated guidance will be published "in the coming months" with a public consultation to conclude by the end of the year. The DfE has stated that the guidance will come into statutory force "as soon as possible after that."

In a further focus on the subject, the **Education Secretary, Gillian Keegan, wrote to schools at the end of the spring term to remind them they are required by law to publish their RSHE policy and consult parents on it.** The Education secretary clarified that schools should also provide all curriculum materials to parents and stop entering contracts that seek to prevent parents from seeing these materials.

Governing boards and Academy trusts to note their responsibilities.

School Guidance for Transgender Pupils

The Prime Minister has promised that schools will receive guidance on policies for transgender pupils for the summer term.

The think tank [Policy Exchange](#) which looked at 154 English secondary schools. The report found that only 39 of the schools reliably informed parents when pupils identified as trans or questioned their gender, 87 schools were found not to reliably inform parents, 14 did not provide enough detail and a further 14 chose not to respond.

The report claimed some schools felt disclosing information to parents about whether a pupil questioned their gender identity, or expressed a wish to change gender, would breach the child's confidentiality.

Watch this space! [Information](#)

Governing Board Diversity Data

The DfE has updated its guidance on what LA (Local Authority) maintained schools and Academy Trusts should publish online, specifically with respect to collecting and publishing Governing Board diversity data.

The DfE is “encouraging” (thus it is not yet mandatory) schools to collect and publish Governing Board members’ diversity data. The DfE states that diversity is important, and it wants Governing Boards to be increasingly reflective of the communities they serve.

The diversity information must be widely accessible to members of the school community and the public. However, schools must ensure that individuals cannot be identified through the publication of data, particularly when board member levels are low. Board members can opt out of sharing their information, including protected characteristics, at any given time including after publication of the data.

The DfE has stated that there is no prescriptive way to collect diversity data from volunteers; this needs to be done on a voluntary basis. However, Trusts and schools may prefer to adopt a similar approach to how they collate the diversity data of their pupils.

[What maintained schools must publish online](#)

What's new: Collecting and publishing governing board diversity data

Governing boards to note their responsibilities.

[Special Education Needs and Disability](#) [The SEND and Alternative Provision Plan](#)

The roadmap summarises the actions the DfE will take to improve the SEND and alternative provision system in England that are set out in the improvement plan.

This is a lengthy Improvement Plan, and it is recommended that all Governors read the detailed Executive Summary, pages 5-14.

Information

Equal Access to Sport

The Government is setting out new standards for equal access to sports, making it clear that girls and boys should be offered the same sports during PE and extracurricular time in schools. Schools that successfully deliver equal opportunities for girls and boys will be rewarded through the School Games Mark, which will assess parity of provision in PE and extracurricular sport.

The full package includes:

- equal access to sports in school, setting out that offering girls and boys the same sports, where it is wanted, is the new standard;
- delivering a minimum 2 hours of curriculum PE, with more support being offered through a refreshed School Sport Action Plan;
- expansion of the Schools Games Mark in order to reward parity of provision for girls;
- an investment of £22M for two years of further funding for the School Games Organiser network (SGO). The Government is also providing security for the SGO network, with the commitment of funding until the end of the summer term 2025. The programme delivers on the Government's ambition to ensure that all children and young people, no matter their background, can be active; and
- up to £57M funding for the opening school facilities programme which will enable more school sport facilities to be opened outside of school hours, especially targeted at girls, disadvantaged pupils, and pupils with special educational needs.

The Government have also confirmed that:

- £600M will be invested across the next two years through the PE and Sport Premium;

- schools will receive updated guidance this summer setting out how to use the funding to the best advantage of their pupils; and
- a new digital tool will be introduced for schools to report on their spending of the PE and Sport Premium and allow the Government to understand where further guidance is needed.

Alongside this work, Ofsted will also be publishing a report into PE in the coming months, which will inform future inspections and set out what they believe is possible in terms of offering high quality PE and equal access to sports.

Governing boards to note their responsibilities.

Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance

Academy trustees and governing bodies are expected to:

| | |
|---|---|
| All pupils | Take an active role in attendance improvement, support their school(s) to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures. Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties. Ensure school staff receive training on attendance. |
| Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent | Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it. |
| Persistently absent pupils | Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it. |
| Severely absent pupils | Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it. |
| Support for cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers | Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it. |
| Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance | Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it |
| Support for pupils with a social worker | Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it. |
| Monitoring | Ofsted considers governing boards efforts as part of inspections |

Governing boards and Academy trusts to note their responsibilities.

Strike Action Planned

The NEU (National Education Union) have confirmed plans to support both GCSE and A-level students during the upcoming strike days, stating that the Union has been speaking to head teachers to make sure those pupils are in class for exam preparations.

The NEU is also planning to ask its members whether they wish to continue strike action in the autumn term of the 2023/24 academic year.

The NEU is not the only union which is involved in pay discussions. Four unions in total have been involved in talks with the Government, calling for above-inflation pay rises, funded by additional money from the Government, rather than coming from schools' existing budgets. The NASUWT and Association of School and College Leaders are also balloting members on the offer. The NAHT, the school leaders' union has just overwhelmingly rejected the Government's pay offer and will now be asking its members if they would take industrial action.

Governing boards and Academy trusts to note.

Academies and free schools

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

What's new: Collecting and publishing governing board diversity data.

Academy trusts to note their responsibilities.

[ESFA \(Education & Skills Funding Agency\) updates for Academies: 3rd May 2023](#)

View current and previous Education and Skills Funding Agency allocations by organisation or funding type. This information is available to all - you do not need to be signed in.

Trust boards, for information

[The Academies Regulatory and Commissioning Review](#)

The DfE's Academies Regulatory and Commissioning Review was published at the end of March. Whilst the Department has not made a formal statement on the direction of travel for the school system following the decision to not progress the Schools Bill further through Parliament, the Department's view is very clear:

"The DfE knows that the best Academy Trusts not only deliver great results for children, but also share their expertise and develop innovative ideas and resources to improve outcomes across the school system. As a result, this is why it wants to ensure all schools benefit from being in a high-quality Multi-Academy Trust."

The DfE further argues that the academies programme has addressed three fundamental weaknesses in the UK education system:

- It has created a mechanism to address individual school failure, where once local authorities lacked the capacity to do so;
- It has created freedoms for leaders and teachers to innovate, identify and adopt effective practices; and
- The establishment of MATs (multi academy trusts) has created a way to scale effective leadership and governance across multiple schools, widen career development opportunities, and improve system resilience.

Figures referred to in the Review highlight that over 55% of pupils in state-funded education now study in academies, which includes 80% of secondary schools, 40% of primary schools and 45% of special schools and alternative provision.

Ofsted

The Importance of Reading

The importance of reading continues to be highlighted by Ofsted. Ofsted have clarified that reading will constitute one of the deep dives undertaken during primary school inspections as well as be a focus in secondary school inspections. Inspectors will want to see how well pupils read so that they are able to read for pleasure, access all areas of the curriculum as they move through secondary school and effectively accomplish tasks in their adult lives.

March saw Ofsted write a blog on the importance of reading for SEND children which specifically looks at:

- All pupils needing the same knowledge of the alphabetic code to become independent readers and spellers;
- The curriculum remaining the same but the pedagogy being different;
- Making reasonable adjustments to help pupils access the same phonics curriculum as their peers; and
- What effective schools do.

The blog can be accessed [here](#)

Governing boards and Academy trusts to note.

National Governance Association/DfE

A decade-long government programme supporting struggling schools to improve their governance is set to be scrapped as ministers bid to reduce spending.

The Department for Education-funded national leaders of governance (NLGs) scheme were first launched in 2012, and reformed in 2021, to help governance boards judged to be weak.

The programme “will not take any new commissions going forward.” Communications to schools and trusts are also said to be “forthcoming,” as officials work with the NGA (National Governance Association) to confirm plans through to October.

Clerks briefing meeting date your diary

Please book a place [here](#)

Wednesday 28th June at 10.00am

Additional information

24th May, 6.00-8.00pm Core Governor Induction covers generic safeguarding

Also included in the briefing:

Policy Exchange Executive Summary

DfE Minimum expectation on length of school day

NGA Governing board diversity indicators form

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 Supplement

