



Clerks' Monthly Briefing

November 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

Phone: 01895 717321

Email: office@governor.support

Website: www.governor.support

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 email

Spring Term Governor & Clerk Training Courses

Please can you remind your governors of the range of courses that will be available, also that they feedback on the course(s) attended to the governing board and to update your training records.

Please remind new or recently appointed governors to book a place on the New Governors three-part course. Follow this link to [book](#).

Your minutes need to show what learning was achieved and shared with all governors. Check the courses [here](#).

Please ask your colleagues to let us know if they cannot attend after booking a place. A phone call or email please.

Agenda reminders

Items to consider

- ✓ DfE Consultation
- ✓ Pupil progress
- ✓ Pupil Attendance in school
- ✓ Pupil & PE (Physical Education) premium
- ✓ Behaviour & Exclusions
- ✓ Multiplication tables check
- ✓ Special Educational Needs/EHCPs
- ✓ Headteacher appraisal
- ✓ Review complaints policy and update as necessary
- ✓ [School financial value standard](#)
- ✓ Academy trusts, self-assessment
- ✓ Winter weather arrangements
- ✓ Artificial Intelligence-Data protection

We are seeking feedback from your board members about future training course topics, times, and days.

Please can you share our [survey link](#) with all members of your governing board?

An overview of key issues for Governing Boards to consider

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DfE Updates

Consultation

The government is consulting on proposals for new minimum service level (MSL) laws in schools when staff are on strike.

Education secretary Gillian Keegan said the new legislation would “help us protect children and young people’s education whilst balancing an individual’s right to strike”.

Ministers would set the expected MSL, and then it would be left up to schools to work out the required staff needed to meet the requirement.

Employers would be able to issue “work notices” to ensure they can deliver the MSL, with unions then obliged to take “reasonable steps to ensure compliance”.

Closes:30th January 2024

Find out more [here](#).

Schools have been invited to request a free portrait of King Charles III

An invite sent to schools from the Department for Education (DfE) says that those wishing to take up the offer must apply before 2 February.

Delivery of the image of the King in “ceremonial dress with decorations” will take place between February and April next year.

Contributions that schools pay towards teachers’ pensions will rise by more than 20 per cent from April 2024

Government has committed to funding the rise for state schools and colleges for one year, with any further commitments to be decided at future spending reviews.

Autumn statement: No additional funding for schools

No further school revenue funding was included in the autumn statement. Neither was any extra capital funding provided to help address the schools building crisis.

The statement was met with disappointment from many in the sector and came despite a pledge by the prime minister Rishi Sunak to prioritise education in future spending reviews.

[Multiplication tables check](#)

This statistical release focuses on the multiplication tables check (MTC) results of pupils at the end of year 4 attending schools in England.

It includes statistics for pupils:

- at national level by characteristic breakdowns such as gender, disadvantage, free school meal eligibility, ethnicity, special educational need status, first language, month of birth, school type, school phase and school religious character
- at regional and local authority level by characteristic breakdowns such as free school meal eligibility, ethnicity, special educational need status and first language

[Permanent exclusions and suspensions](#)

Comparative data autumn 2022/23 and 2021/22

[School financial value standard](#)

For the financial year 2023 to 2024:

- schools should submit their SFVS (Schools Financial Value Standard) to their local authority no later than 31 March 2024
- [Checklist guidance](#)

Clerks' reminder, publish an updated Pupil Premium strategy statement every academic year before 31 December

Ofsted Updates

Ofsted changes which will make its post-inspection complaints process “quicker” and “increase transparency” following a consultation with the sector.

- The changes include “enhanced” on-site “professional dialogue” during inspections to address any issues and the scrapping of its internal review process.
- They will come into effect from January and April next year.
- Schools will be given an opportunity to call Ofsted the day after the end of an inspection visit if they have “unresolved issues”.
- Previously the watchdog said this may include raising informal concerns about the process and its “likely outcome”, or queries about what happens next.

Schools with high absences that can show they are doing “all they reasonably can” to raise attendance will be judged “favourably” during inspections, Ofsted has said.

The watchdog has published a blog post that aims to clarify its position on attendance, as higher levels persist post-pandemic.

Academy Updates

Academy trusts with large levels of reserves will not be told by government they have to spend the cash, nor face having it clawed back, new government guidance sets out.

However, officials warned those sitting on reserves worth a fifth or more of their income will be asked to show they have “sufficient plans” in place for the cash to “meet pupils’ needs”.

New government advice also suggested trusts with spare reserves could look to invest the cash to bring in extra income.

The DfE has published a [“good practice guide”](#) on academy trust reserves.

[All academy trusts which have an open academy must complete the self-assessment checklist each year.](#)

The checklist helps governing bodies and trust boards to:

- check they have appropriate financial management and governance arrangements

- check they are meeting the right standards to achieve a good level of financial health and resource management
- show areas for change to make sure resources are used to support high-quality teaching and the best education outcomes for pupils

News in Brief

Reviewing your complaints procedure

Considering the recommendation that boards review their complaints policy every autumn term. Having an effective procedure in place will increase the likelihood of achieving a satisfactory outcome for all parties involved while minimising the time spent on dealing with complaints, which, given the governor workload crisis, is a key benefit of the review.

Have multiple stages – the DfE recommends two stages, where the second (an appeal stage) is heard by a panel of governors who will consider the complaint afresh.

- Set realistic and reasonable timescales for each action, for example, timescales for acknowledging a complaint, investigating, and reaching conclusions.
- Make it clear that complainants can raise their complaint with the DfE once the school's procedure is completed.
- Who can make complaints – procedures must not be limited to parents/carers.
- How complaints might be resolved and at what stages formal written responses are issued.
- Who complaints should be addressed to and how they are managed at each stage, with clear steps to follow where the complaint is about a member of staff, the headteacher or a governor. (The procedure should also be clear that complainants should not approach individual governors/trustees to raise concerns or complaints.)
- The scope and application of the procedure (refer to the DfE's list of complaints not in scope).
- Arrangements for panel hearings, including how panels will be constituted and conducted.
- How anonymous complaints will be handled (they are not normally investigated, however, the headteacher or chair of governors may decide whether the complaint calls for investigation).
- A process for handling large volumes of complaints on the same subject.
- Complaints outside term time were received on the first school day after the holiday.
- Withdrawal of complaints – if a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint, they should confirm this in writing.

National Foundation for Education Research

Teachers whose schools have more workload reduction strategies in place are significantly more likely to have positive views on manageability of workload and job

satisfaction. This is according to research carried out by the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER).

The report, which reviews current practices being used to manage teacher workload in England, also found that that school leadership was one of the few mediating factors of workload reduction, showing the importance of culture and a whole-school approach to reducing workload.

[National Governance Association](#)

Summary of governance workload study

- A rising number of exclusions.
- Escalation of complaints to the governing board complaints committee, with increased numbers and complexity.
- The broader challenges within the system intensify difficulties for governing boards.
- The expanding expectations on schools to support families apply equally to governing boards.
- Growing board vacancies create pressures.
- Chairs face heightened responsibilities, managing more tasks and hindering succession planning.
- Inefficient board practices and dysfunctional dynamics frustrate volunteers, leading to poor time use.
- Training expectations beyond induction become overwhelming.
- The considerable time commitment for governance poses challenges reconciling with other responsibilities, contributing to a mental load on committed volunteers.

[What governing boards & headteachers should expect of each other](#)

Updated in 2022 but worth reviewing with your board at the start of the New Year.

[Parental engagement report 2023](#)

Based on feedback from 38,000 parents and carers, the report found that 58% of parents feel completely or quite satisfied with the school's efforts to engage them as parents, while one in five (21%) feel only slightly satisfied, or not satisfied at all. It also found that primary parents are far more satisfied than secondary parents with the school's efforts to engage them.

This report can be used by schools when reviewing their parental engagement strategies to better understand and help the relationship between the school and its parents.

Parental involvement is often key to pupil success and parents are one of the most important stakeholders for governing boards.

Spring Term Governor & Clerk Training and Development Programme

Clerks Briefing	Wednesday 10th January 2024	10.00am-11.00am
Clerks Briefing	Thursday 8th February 2024	10.00am-11.00am
Clerks Briefing	Tuesday 5th March 2024	10.00am-11.00am
Meeting the Inspector	Wednesday 17th January 2024	6.30pm-8.00pm
Understanding school finance for academy and maintained school governors	Wednesday 31st January 2024	6.30pm-8.00pm
New Governors Course Part 1	Tuesday 6th February 2024	6.30pm-8.00pm
New Governors Course Part 2	Tuesday 20th February 2024	6.30pm-8.00pm
New Governors Course Part 3	Tuesday 5th March 2024	6.30pm-8.00pm
Q & A meeting for chairs and vice chairs	Wednesday 6th March 2024	6.30pm-8.00pm
Budgeting & Human Resources Solutions for Governing Boards	Wednesday 13 th March 2024	6.30pm-8.00pm
Special needs link governors <i>Understanding your role</i>	Wednesday 20th March	6.30pm-8.00pm

All are virtual meetings using Microsoft Teams

To book a place on the courses listed above, please follow this [link](#)

