



Clerks Briefing, January 2025

An overview of key issues for Governing Boards to consider and review

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Department for Education

[Children`s Wellbeing and Schools Bill](#) December 2024

Summary:

- Three branded uniform items maximum
- Flexi-schooled pupils will need to be on council registers
- Beefed up school attendance orders
- Special school parents need council permission for home education
- New legal definition of full-time education
- Ofsted to get power to seize illegal schools evidence
- Teacher misconduct agency scope expanded
- QTS and national curriculum requirement for academies
- New non-compliance directions for academy trusts
- No automatic academy orders
- Councils can open new schools (but SoS will decide)
- National pay rules extended to academies

The bill states that “senior executive leaders appointed by multi-academy trusts or single academy trusts are not within scope, even if they are also the principal or headteacher of an academy school or an alternative provision academy.” Any changes will not happen until September 2026.

- Legal duty to co-operate on admissions
- Councils to get power to direct academy admissions
- Councils will be able to object to academies' capacity

Further reading: [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill 2024: policy summary notes](#)

Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence (RISE)

The Department of Education is set to roll out regional improvement for standards and excellence (RISE) teams from January 2025. The new intervention model aims to support schools on a regional level, with the teams RAG rate schools for support and draw up local area priorities.

Government is recruiting school leaders to work with civil servants in the new teams, who will commission support from bodies like trusts, councils or federations. The government has set out new thresholds for intervention, which will be based on Ofsted report cards which will be introduced in September 2025.

The levels of support will include:

- Universal support for schools with 'minimal issues'
- Targeted support: For schools with 'singular or several issues'
- Intervention for schools needing 'emergency support'

The support teams are due to start in January, but Ofsted report cards won't be introduced until September. So, what happens in the interim?

Southwest regional director Lucy Livings said the teams will "start working with a smaller number of schools, of those that we deem most vulnerable at the moment, based on both the current judgments and the data that's available. From September, it will be the report card that will be the main criteria."

Another "objective" of the RISE teams will be that "every part of the country has a coherent set of local area priorities". The teams will work with local authorities, dioceses and mayoral combined authorities to draw up priorities, to be set out in the Autumn. This will allow "local partners to work collaboratively to solve issues affecting children in their communities".

[Cost of school uniform survey, 9th January 2025](#)

This report surveys the cost of school uniform in 2023 and assesses the relative changes to that cost since the previous study. It also provides information on the changes schools are making to their uniform policy in the light of statutory guidance.

[Statutory guidance on the cost of school uniforms](#) was published in November 2021 and came into force in September 2022. It states that schools should:

- ensure their uniforms are affordable
- give high priority to considerations of cost for parents
- be able to demonstrate how best value for money has been achieved

Schools must have regard to the guidance when developing and implementing uniform policies.

[Data protection in schools](#) Updated 18th December 2024

This toolkit will help school staff, governors, and trustees:

- understand how to comply with data protection law
- develop their data policies and processes
- know what staff and pupil data to keep
- follow good practices for preventing personal data breaches

Summary:

The policies and processes schools and multi-academy trusts need to protect personal data and respond effectively to a personal data breach.

Change made:

Sharing personal data – Information has been added on sharing data with school immunisation programmes.

Governing and Trust Boards:

The responsibility and accountability for compliance sits with governors and trustees. Schools and multi-academy trusts risk getting a fine if they do not comply.

Governors and trustees check that the school:

- monitors their data protection performance
- supports the data protection officer
- has good network security infrastructure to keep personal data protected
- has a business continuity plan in place that includes cyber security

[Filtering and monitoring standards for schools and colleges, updated 7th January 2025](#)

Governing bodies and proprietors have overall strategic responsibility for meeting this standard. They should make sure that filtering and monitoring provision is reviewed at least once every academic year. This can be part of a wider online safety review.

The review should be conducted by members of the senior leadership team, the designated safeguarding lead, and IT support. It should also involve the governor responsible. You should record the results of the online safety review and make it available to anyone who is entitled to inspect that information.

Sustainability and climate change: a strategy for the education and children's services systems Updated 20 December 2023

In line with the department for education's (DfE) sustainability and climate change strategy, each school or educational institution must put in place a sustainability lead and documented climate action plan by 2025. The latter must outline the steps and strategies they will take to address and mitigate climate change.

Sustainability leadership and climate action plans in education

Senior leadership team (SLT), governors, trustees, and executive leaders
As senior decision makers, SLT and governors should support and drive your sustainable activity. They should:

- provide the authority and support to drive and embed culture change
- ensure climate change and sustainability feature on the agenda at key meetings
- be responsible for succession planning, so that commitment to sustainability endures in the setting

Pupil attendance in schools

Pupil attendance in schools: 9 September 2024 to 20 December 2024

Schools financial value standard (SFVS)

For the financial year 2024 to 2025, schools should submit their SFVS checklist to their local authority no later than 31 March 2025.

What schools must publish on their website

Schools' websites must include:

- admission arrangements, including how to apply
- details of the curriculum
- behaviour policy
- links to Ofsted reports
- links to performance data
- the school's latest key stage 2 and 4 attainment and progress measures
- their special educational needs (SEN) information report, which includes information about their policies for children or young people with [special educational needs and disabilities](#)
- the amount of money they get for taking underprivileged children (the 'pupil premium'), what they do with it and the effect it's had

National Professional Qualifications (NPQ), 10th January 2025

The government announced a review of the NPQ framework.

The review will look at making sure NPQs are providing better training in four key areas: SEND, leadership progression, workload reduction, and operational leadership.

The review will look at ensuring the NPQs offering the “best practice” for teaching pupils with special needs.

On SEND, it will look at the best practice for teaching pupils with special education needs and disabilities.

NHS/DfE special schools in England free NHS eye tests

The government is progressing with delayed plans to offer students in all special schools in England free NHS eye tests – but it has been warned it could create a “huge unfunded burden”.

In October, the government and NHS England re-committed to a pledge that eyesight checks would be carried out annually for students in all day or residential special education needs schools.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) said NHS England will provide up to £12.7 million in funding annually from next year to support this national rollout, following a pilot in 83 schools.

Sight tests will be done in participating schools, and children who need glasses will be given two pairs of their choice, with specialist frames included, free of charge, NHS guidance states.

Read the full article in Schools Week [here](#)

SeeAbility, a charity, says children with learning disabilities are 28 times more likely to have a serious sight problem, and thousands across the country are missing out on eye care they need.

[BCS \(The Chartered Institute for IT\) calls for schools to publish AI policies](#)

A new BCS study of thousands of secondary school teachers found a mixed attitude towards the technology, and confusion on AI policy in schools.

The research found, most teachers are reluctant to use or are not interested in artificial intelligence for pupil learning and assessment. The study of more than 5,000 teachers found that the majority (64%) are not using AI tools such as ChatGPT professionally, and 19% are not interested in using it in the future. The vast majority of teachers (84%) have not changed the way they assess students’ work, despite the availability of AI

tools. Only 41% say they are regularly checking homework and coursework for plagiarism content from the web.

A lack of clarity on their schools' policy around AI also appeared to be an issue, with 41% saying their school does not have an agreed approach to AI, while 17% said they do not know if any such policy exists.

In its report, BCS calls for the understanding of AI to be made a significant part of teacher training, alongside wider digital literacy. The study also calls for schools to publish AI policies on their websites — but they can only be expected to do that with clear guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), the qualifications regulator (Ofqual), and other relevant bodies.

Ofsted Updates

- Trials of new inspection approach to begin week of 6 January.
Ofsted has announced that it will begin trials of a new approach to education inspection in the first week of the new term, with visits to a small number of volunteer schools. These visits will informally test elements of the proposed inspection framework, which Ofsted will publish for consultation later in January. Later in the term, and in parallel with the consultation, Ofsted will formally pilot the new approach in schools as well as other education settings,
- Consultation on renewed education inspection framework to open later in January
- A consultation on introducing school report cards in September will launch this month.
- Under the new report cards, safeguarding will become a separate criteria. Safeguarding should no longer fall under the leadership and governance judgment as words such as 'outstanding' do not fit when judging safeguarding.

[Big Listen action monitoring report: December 2024](#)

[Ofsted publishes autumn school inspector training materials](#) December 17th 2024

- strong foundations – focusing on the importance of foundational knowledge
- changes to ungraded inspections
- changes to ungraded inspections for lead inspectors

The Inspector Calls, is your board prepared?

Just to note there are a number of schools who haven't been inspected recently. Please do check that you governors are aware when the last inspection was and are prepared.

Inspection year	Number due for re inspection
2019	9
2020	1

2021	3
2022	8

We are offering a course for governors and clerks on preparation for Ofsted on Wednesday 12th February at 6.30pm. Book a place [here](#).

Academy Updates

[Outcomes of the review of qualifications reform](#) 12th December 2024

In summary:

- will retain 157 qualifications in the system (alongside T Levels and A levels), that were due to be defunded, to support learners and the economy
- will not be applying the previously proposed rules of combination – it should be for colleges and sixth forms to work with students to devise the best mix for each individual
- have provided certainty to education providers, students and their parents and guardians to make the position clear up to 2027
- have confirmed that T Levels are the primary technical route for 16 to 19 year olds, being based on the knowledge, skills and behaviours that employers need and including the much-valued industry placement

News in Brief

Help us to help you and your board

Please let us know about any:

- board appointments, reappointments and resignations
- contact emails and mobile numbers of members of the board
- dates of appointment and term of office
- type of governor
- positions held, i.e., chair, vice chair, committee chair, member of a committee, link governor
- copies of the approved board minutes
- It's important that you [keep your GIAS establishment record up to date](#) so that the DfE can always contact you if needed.

Reminder

Please remind your chair of governors and committee chairs to sign minutes when agreed and approved. [DfE The School Governance \(Roles, Procedures & Allowances\) Regulations 2013](#) Part 4 section 15

Governor recruitment video

Learn Sheffield have produced a video to promote governor recruitment. Whilst aimed at a recruitment campaign for Sheffield the video may also be helpful to explain the role of a governor. You can view the video on YouTube and it lasts just over three minutes.

[Governance Engagement Video](#)

[NSPCC Safeguarding and child protection self-assessment tool](#)

Our free self-assessment tool will help your school audit current safeguarding and child protection arrangements. The tool will also help to identify areas for development and support you in making any changes necessary.

The tool is organised into five standards:

- leadership and governance
- policies and procedures
- recognising and responding to child protection
- supporting children and families
- adults working with children.

Completing your self-assessment

Work through each question and use our information, advice, and resources to help you assess whether you have the necessary arrangements in place. You can use the “optional comments” box to note any actions you have taken or need to take. Do not use this box to record safeguarding concerns or personal data.

Do not forget to save your progress as you work through the questions. You can view your progress in the “saved assessment” area where you can save or print your action plan to see the steps you need to take.

[An Introduction to Self-harm Prevention in Schools and Colleges](#)

Discover how to lead the prevention of self-harm in schools and college.

Attendees are not expected to be mental health or self-harm specialists and are not required to have had previous experience of leading a strategy to prevent self-harm. The webinar will discuss self-harm, mental ill health and potentially distressing topics exploring environmental risk factors.

Tuesday 4th February 2025, 4.30pm-6.00pm

Free to attend course provided by Anna Freud Trust

[Institute for Fiscal Studies \(IFS\)](#)

New estimates by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) find that growth in mainstream school funding per pupil in England in 2025–26 (2.8% in cash terms) will not be sufficient to cover the expected increase in school costs (3.6%). Growth in school costs reflects the full effects of the 5.5% rise in teacher pay from September 2024, and the recommended pay offer of 2.8% for September 2025.

While pupil numbers are expected to fall by around 2% over the next two years, this is unlikely to allow for a cut in the overall school's budget. **Rapid rises in the cost of special educational needs (SEN) provision seem likely to wipe out any opportunities for savings**, even if core per-pupil funding is kept constant in real terms.

Governor and Clerk Training and Development Programme

Spring term /summer term 2025

To book a place on any course:

- **Essential please remember to use the same email account when booking a place and joining the Microsoft Teams meeting**
- Please follow the course link(s) where you will find full details about each course. You will then be able to register and book your place(s),
- You will receive an automatic email reply which will confirm each booking, together with a Microsoft Teams meeting link for the course.
- An automatic reminder email will be sent one hour before the course.

Any questions you have about a course, or any other queries please contact us:

Phone: 01895 717321 Email: office@governor.support

Clerks briefing meetings <i>Clerks only, book your meetings by clicking on the dates opposite please.</i>	Tuesday 14th January 2025 Wednesday 12th February 2025 Thursday 6th March 2025 Tuesday 22nd April 2025 Wednesday 14th May 2025 Thursday 5th June 2025 Tuesday 8th July 2025	All at 10.00am- 11.00am	
Finance for governors of maintained schools & academies	Tuesday 14 th January 2025	6.30pm- 8.00pm	Register and book a place here
Hot Topics/Question time Just a selection of some of the topics we can discuss:	Wednesday 5 th February 2025	6.30pm- 8.00pm	Register and book a place

Budget, Exclusions, Behaviour, Staffing			here
The Inspector Calls Is your board prepared? <i>Update of current inspection framework & possible future structure</i>	Wednesday 12 th February 2025	6.30pm-8.00pm	Register and book a place here
Governance Essentials: A course for New School Governors Three-part course <i>We strongly recommend attending all parts of the course</i>	Dates to follow for this term Please check with your clerk for more details	6.30pm-8.00pm	
Complaints How to prepare and manage the process For clerks and all governors who may be involved in an investigation or serve on a hearing panel	Thursday 6 th March 2025	6.30pm-8.00pm	Register and book a place here
Taking the chair (Part 1) Course for chairs, vice chairs, committee chairs and aspiring chairs <i>Essential to attend both parts of this course</i>	Thursday 27 th March 2025	6.30pm-8.00pm	Register and book a place here
Taking the chair (Part 2) Course for chairs, vice chairs, committee chairs and aspiring chairs <i>Essential to attend both parts of this course</i>	Thursday 3 rd April 2025	6.30pm-8.00pm	Register and book a place here
Understanding the role of the Safeguarding link governor	Thursday 1 st May 2025	6.30pm-8.00pm	Register and book a place here

Spring term agenda items

Full Governing board

Policy review

Approve the SEND Information Report (to be updated annually). The report (also referred to as the school offer) explains school's policy for children with SEND and must be published on the school website. The governing board should be satisfied suitable provision is in place and complies with legislation.

New item with policy review

Determine the admissions policy. The FGB or trust board needs to annually determine admission arrangements by 28th February and publish by 15th March sending copies to the LA (and appropriate Diocese for Church schools).

Behaviour and discipline

Produce a written statement of behaviour principles and ensure this is published on the school website. The school Behaviour Policy will be based on the agreed behaviour principles.

Review of information on the school website

It is the responsibility of the Governing Board to ensure the website is up to date and complies with statutory requirements including the publishing of interests declared by the headteacher and other governors.

Teaching and Learning Committee Spring term

SEND provision

The SENDCO must be a qualified teacher and have adequate time and resources to fulfil the SENDCO role.

School Food Standards

Ensure that where the school provides school lunches and/or other school food and milk, this meets DfE standards.

Careers information (years 8 to 13) and Provider Access Policy

The school must publish information about the school's careers programme. This information must relate to the delivery of careers guidance to year 8 to 13 pupils in accordance with Section 42A of the Education Act 1997. For the current academic year, you must include:

- The name, email address and telephone number of the school's Careers Leader
- A summary of the careers programme, including details of how pupils, parents, teachers, and employers may access information about the careers programme
- How the school measures and assesses the impact of the careers programme on pupils
- The date of the school's next review of the information published

The Provider Access Policy Setting out the school's arrangements for managing the access of providers to pupils at the school for the purpose of giving them information about the provider's education or training offer.

Early Years Foundation Stage (Primary and Early Years settings)

Ensure the setting complies with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory documents.

Resources Committee Spring term

Schools' Financial Value Standard (SFVS)

Complete a self-assessment against the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) by 31 March.

- Ensure school has in place an inventory of non-capital assets
- Ensure robust controls are in place in relation to fraudulent or improper use of public funds.
- Agree/approve completed document at full GB meeting

Health and safety

Ensure there is an annual inspection of premises and priorities for maintenance and development is identified.

Contact Governor Support Service Ltd



01895 717321



office@governor.support



www.governor.support