



Clerks Briefing, September 2025

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

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Welcome back

We hope you've had a restful and enjoyable summer and are ready for the new term ahead.

As we begin the autumn term, we'd like to extend a warm welcome back and thank you for your continued support of your governing board.

We're also offering a range of training courses this term for both new and experienced governors, designed to support their development and strengthen governance across our schools. View the course programme and book [here](#)

Please do share these opportunities with your governing board, and don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions.

Department for Education – Updates

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 - UPDATE

The DfE has published KCSIE 2025 and which came into force on 1 September ([Annex F for the changes](#))

Key themes include:

- Early help – schools must identify vulnerabilities at the earliest stage, with particular focus on pupils with SEND, mental health needs or risk of exploitation.
- Staff knowledge and training – all staff must receive safeguarding and child protection training at induction and regular updates, with greater emphasis on online safety and filtering/monitoring systems.
- Leadership and governance – governing boards must ensure a strong safeguarding culture, appoint a suitably trained Designated Safeguarding Lead, and review policies regularly.
- Safer recruitment and vetting – clear requirements for DBS checks, prohibition checks, right-to-work verification and overseas record checks.
- Child-on-child abuse and sexual violence – policies must set out a zero-tolerance approach to harassment, violence or harmful behaviour, with trauma-informed support for victims.
- Allegations about staff – boards must ensure procedures cover both serious allegations and low-level concerns, with staff confident in how to report.
- Emerging threats – schools must be alert to issues such as radicalisation, county lines, domestic abuse, forced marriage, FGM and online harm.

Governing boards are explicitly responsible for ensuring compliance with KCSIE and embedding a safeguarding culture.

Questions for governors to ask include:

- Have safeguarding policies been updated to reflect the 2025 changes?

- How is safeguarding training for all staff, volunteers and governors being refreshed?
 - What evidence can leaders provide that safer recruitment and vetting checks are being applied consistently?
 - How does the board gain assurance on the school's response to child-on-child abuse and online risks?
-

New EYFS Framework

The Department for Education has brought in new versions of the **EYFS statutory frameworks** (one for childminders, one for group and school-based providers). While the learning and care standards themselves remain consistent, there are now additional requirements linked to **employment references**.

Providers must use the new **early years employment reference template** when giving references for staff. This is designed to improve safeguarding and ensure consistent practice across the sector.

The EYFS continues to set the standards for:

- Helping children learn and develop well from birth to five
- Keeping children healthy and safe
- Preparing children with the knowledge and skills they need to start school

Governing boards to note

- Ensure leaders and early years staff are working from the new September 2025 framework (childminders, nurseries, and school-based provision each have their own version).
- Ask whether safer recruitment processes include the new reference requirements.
- Keep oversight on how the EYFS is implemented in your school's early years provision, especially around safeguarding, staff qualifications, and readiness for inspection.

How Martyn's Law will affect education settings

The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 received Royal Assent on Thursday 3 April. The government intends for there to be an implementation period of at least 24 months before the act comes into force. This period will enable those responsible for premises and events to have sufficient time to understand their new obligations, and to plan and prepare accordingly.

While those that fall within the scope of the act may wish to consider the requirements, there is no requirement to comply with them until the legislation comes into force. The government will publish statutory guidance during the 24-month implementation period. This will be subject to

stakeholder consultation prior to publication. This guidance will assist those responsible to understand the requirements set out in the legislation.

What will you need to do to comply with the act?

Settings will need to have appropriate procedures in place. This includes:

- evacuation (to get people out of the building)
- invacuation (moving people to a safe place)
- lockdown (to secure the premises against attackers)
- communication

Settings will need to appoint a responsible person and notify the SIA, as the regulator. For primary and secondary education, further education, and higher education settings the responsible person is a body or institution, as set out in Schedule 1 of the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025. This is, for example, the local authority or the relevant proprietor or governing board, as opposed to a designated individual such as a safeguarding lead or headteacher within the institution.

Relationships, Sex and Health Education – new guidance from 2026

In a new statutory [guidance](#) on relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) will replace the 2019 document from September 2026. The changes expand the curriculum and set clearer expectations for how schools work with parents.

Highlights include:

Primary schools are strongly encouraged to teach about same-sex parents and different family structures.

Pupils must be taught the facts and the law on biological sex and gender reassignment, with schools taking care not to present contested views as fact.

Expanded content on sexual harassment and abuse, including stalking, public harassment, revenge porn and strangulation.

Stronger focus on online risks such as pornography, incel culture and deepfakes.

New health content on suicide prevention, self-harm, eating disorders, vaping, gambling, menstrual health and bereavement.

Schools must consult parents on RSHE policies and show them the resources they plan to use. Parents can view all curriculum materials but cannot veto content.

Governing boards to note:

- the priority will be to ensure policies and parental engagement plans are updated in good time and that staff training is in place for the more complex topics.

- Boards should be confident that RSHE sits firmly within safeguarding and wellbeing strategies and that parents understand what is being taught.

Current regulations:

[Relationships Education \(primary\) updated 15th July 2025](#)

[Relationships and Sex Education \(RSE\) \(secondary\) updated 15th July 2025](#)

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Governing boards and trustees to note:

- Boards should recognise that AI uptake is uneven, with risks of widening gaps between schools and pupils.
 - Governors should ask whether their school has a clear AI strategy and whether responsibility has been assigned at leadership level.
 - Oversight should include how AI is being used for teaching, assessment, administration and SEND support, alongside staff training needs.
 - Boards should be alert to safeguarding, privacy and ethical risks, and ensure school policies are updated to address them.
 - Governors should consider equity: how will the school's approach to AI support disadvantaged pupils and prevent deepening inequalities
-

KS2,GCSE and A Level results

Governing boards and trustees to note and discuss

These results help governors evaluate how schools support pupil success in core subjects and promote a well-rounded curriculum. Regional and school-type gaps highlight the need to analyse data closely and adjust teaching, curriculum, and interventions accordingly.

Governance Focus: Attendance, Behaviour & Strategic Oversight

As governing boards continue to prioritise culture, consistency, and oversight, it's vital they receive clear assurance that schools are actively monitoring pupil absence and responding swiftly to patterns of poor behaviour. With the emergence of new hubs showcasing practical models of success, governors are well-placed to challenge leaders on how external expertise is being utilised, whether parental engagement is sufficiently robust, and how these efforts are impacting teaching and learning time.

Looking ahead, the government’s forthcoming white paper is expected to outline further plans to strengthen attendance and behaviour strategies. This will be supported by broader investment in breakfast clubs, mental health provision, and improvements to the school estate—offering governors additional levers to support pupil wellbeing and engagement.

School profiles

The Department for Education confirmed it will go ahead with plans to develop online “school profiles to provide parents and the public with clear, reliable information” across a range of performance indicators.

A pilot version will be tested this academic year, with “the aim for the service to be launched publicly in 2026-27”.

DfE said profiles will “help parents make decisions about schools”. They will feature the “most recent” performance data and “be closely integrated with Ofsted’s point-in-time report card[s]”.

Support staff to receive 3.2% pay rise

School support staff will receive a 3.2% pay rise, following agreement with GMB and Unison, though Unite has rejected the deal and may support industrial action. The increase is below teacher pay awards and projected national wage growth, prompting concerns about continued real-terms cuts. Governors must ensure budgets can accommodate the uplift and recognise the vital role of support staff amid ongoing recruitment and retention challenges.

School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document, September 2025

Governing boards, pay committees, staff appointment panels to note

The DfE School Teachers’ Pay and Conditions Document 2025 (STPCD) is valid from 1 September 2025. It sets out the statutory pay framework and conditions of employment for teachers in local-authority-maintained schools in England.

Summary of Key Changes

Pay Award

- A 4% uplift has been applied across all statutory pay ranges and allowances.
- Governing boards must ensure the school’s pay policy is updated to reflect these changes.

Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR) Payments

- Schools may now award proportional TLR1 and TLR2 payments for part-time or shared roles.
- This flexibility becomes mandatory from September 2026.
- Boards should begin reviewing role structures and responsibilities to prepare for this shift.

Leadership Pay and Progression

- Updated guidance on determining headteacher groups, temporary payments, and performance-related progression.
- Boards must ensure leadership pay decisions are transparent, evidence-based, and compliant with the revised framework.

Flexible Working

- Expanded statutory guidance encourages schools to support flexible working arrangements.
- Boards should consider how flexible working supports staff wellbeing, retention, and inclusivity, and ensure policies are aligned with DfE recommendations.

Safeguarding of Pay

- Clarified rules on safeguarded sums for teachers affected by pay reductions due to structural changes.
- Boards must ensure appropriate notification procedures and calculations are in place.

Governing Boards to note:

- Review and approve updated pay policies in line with STPCD 2025.
- Monitor implementation of proportional TLR payments and prepare for 2026 compliance.
- Ensure appraisal systems are robust and clearly linked to pay progression decisions.
- Support leadership teams in embedding flexible working practices.
- Confirm safeguarding protocols are understood and applied correctly.
- Maintain oversight of delegated responsibilities and ensure statutory compliance.

Rising Exclusions Highlight Gaps in Support for Vulnerable Pupils

Suspensions and exclusions have increased to their highest levels since 2006, with a sharp rise in primary exclusions—many involving pupils with SEND. Disparities persist, especially among disadvantaged and Roma pupils.

Governors should ensure behaviour is well-monitored, early interventions are in place, and data is scrutinised by age, SEND, and ethnicity. The government plans reforms, including new hubs and expanded mental health and SEND support.

School uniform

Governing boards and trustees to note:

The education secretary has asked schools to immediately limit the number of branded uniform items they require, even though a proposed statutory cap has not yet become law.

The [schools bill](#) will see branded items limited to three at primary schools and four at secondary, including a tie. It will apply to PE kit and clothes for after-school activities.

The statutory cap is not due to come into effect until September 2026, as the bill is still making its way through Parliament.

Academy updates

[Academy Trust Handbook, updated 1st September 2025](#)

What has changed?

- Digital and estates responsibilities – trusts should now be working towards meeting the 6-core digital and technology standards by 2030, and further guidance has been issued on estates management.
- Accounting officer duties – definitions of regularity, propriety, value for money and feasibility have been updated to align more closely with HM Treasury’s [Managing Public Money](#). Accounting officers also have a strengthened duty to raise concerns with the board or DfE if proposed actions conflict with requirements.
- Executive pay – further clarity on the board’s role in setting executive salaries. Decisions must be transparent, evidence-based, and defensible.
- Procurement – updated guidance on processes and expectations around value for money.
- Cyber security – trusts are explicitly prohibited from paying ransomware demands.
- Regulator and intervention – DfE may now recover funds where there is evidence of fraud or irregularity. Educational performance has been removed as a standalone trigger for a Notice to Improve.

Local boards and trustees to note:

- Ensure your trust board is fully aware of the revised duties of members, trustees, accounting officers and CFOs.
- Scrutinise executive pay decisions – check that a clear policy and evidence base is in place.
- Review how your trust is progressing against digital and cyber standards, particularly around filtering, monitoring and cyber security.
- Confirm that procurement processes, whistleblowing procedures, and risk registers are up to date and reflect the new requirements.

- Ask your leaders how the trust is ensuring estates remain safe and well-maintained, and that asbestos and RAAC risks are actively managed.
- [Schedule of Musts, 2025](#)

Ofsted updates

Ofsted Inspection Reforms – November 2025

Key changes to Ofsted’s inspection framework, effective from November 2025, and outline implications for governance practice.

Overview of Reform

Ofsted is replacing single headline judgements with a **multi-area report card**, offering a more nuanced view of school performance. This aims to improve transparency, reduce stigma, and better reflect strengths and areas for development.

New Grading Structure

Each area will be graded on a **five-point scale**:

- Exceptional
- Strong Standard
- Expected Standard
- Needs Attention
- Urgent Improvement

Safeguarding will be assessed separately as either *Met* or *Not Met*.

Core Evaluation Areas

Inspections will cover 6–8 areas, including:

- Leadership & Governance
- Curriculum & Teaching
- Attendance & Behaviour
- Achievement
- Personal Development & Wellbeing
- Inclusion
- Early Years / Post-16 (where applicable)

Inclusion as a Standalone Area

New emphasis on inclusion, with inspectors evaluating:

- Support for disadvantaged pupils (e.g., pupil premium)
- Provision for SEND and pupils known to social care
- Early identification and tailored teaching
- Strategic oversight by governors/trustees

Governance Expectations

Inspectors will assess how governing boards:

- Fulfil statutory duties and challenge leadership
- Monitor improvement and staff wellbeing
- Oversee CPD and workload management
- Assure themselves that leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's context and are prioritising the right actions for improvement
- Ensure effective use of funding for disadvantaged pupils

Inspection Types

- All inspections will be graded
- Monitoring inspections for schools rated *Needs Attention*
- Focused inspections replace urgent visits

Supporting Materials

Three new documents will accompany the reforms:

- [Inspection Toolkit](#) – grading criteria and descriptors
- [Operating Guide](#) – inspection logistics and expectations
- [Education Inspection Framework](#) – for staff, parents, and communities

Additional Developments

- All inspections led by an HMI
- Optional nominee role for inspection support (a senior member of staff who may support planning, communication throughout the inspection)
- New online platform: *Ofsted – Explore an Area* for public access to inspection insights

Governing boards and trustees to note:

- Review governance practices in light of new expectations
- Ensuring inclusion and wellbeing are strategic priorities
- Prepare for multi-area evaluation and evidence gathering

Note: **Inspections will return on November 10th, but only for schools that have volunteered.** Routine inspections will return no earlier than December 1 – and will be pushed back to the new year if there are enough schools volunteering for inspection.

Ofsted webinars on the new inspection framework (open to staff and governors):

[Primary schools](#), 16th September at 4.00pm-5.00pm

[Primary Schools](#), 5th October at 4.00pm -5.00pm (additional date)

[Secondary schools](#), 17th September at 4.00pm-5.00pm

[Special schools](#), 25th September at 4.00pm-5.00pm

***Book a place on our Ofsted course on Wednesday 15th October at 6.30pm- 8.00pm**

On the horizon

- ✓ The government is drawing up new guidance for schools and parents over complaints to “reduce the burden on leaders.”
- ✓ Schools bill-autumn term
- ✓ SEND-autumn term
- ✓ [Schools and Academies Show NEC Birmingham](#), 19 and 20 November 2025.

Reminders and Suggested Agenda Items

- Headteacher appraisal (appoint 2/3 governors, agree date, and arrange external reviewer to support panel)
- Have you got new or recently appointed governors? Please recommend they attend or Governance Essentials course. Part One 6th November, Part Two 20th November.
- **PE and sports premium**, review and publish by 31st July.
The DfE are aware of digital issues that a number of schools experienced accessing the return and thank you for your patience while these were being resolved.
- Recommend new and recently appointed governors book on our “Governance Essentials” two part course.

Model Governing Board Agenda – Autumn Term 2025

For Maintained Schools and Academies

Governance and Compliance

- **Election of Chair/Vice-Chair** (if not completed in summer)
- **Review committee membership and terms of reference**
- **Update Register of Interests and declarations of interest**
- **Governors and trustees code of conduct**
- **Confirm meeting schedule for the academic year**
- **Review Scheme of Delegation**
 - *Maintained*: LA model
 - *Academies*: Trust-level delegation and Articles of Association
- **Review governance structures**
 - *Academies*: Trust Board and LGB roles
 - *Maintained*: Full GB and committee arrangements

Strategic Leadership and Accountability

- **Headteacher/Principal's report:** pupil outcomes, staffing, safeguarding, attendance
 - **Review of summer exam results and performance data**
 - **School improvement priorities and progress against SIP**
 - **Curriculum updates and statutory compliance**
 - **Trust-wide strategic plan review** (*Academies only*)
-

Finance and Risk Management

- **Budget monitoring and financial performance**
 - **Review of financial procedures and controls**
 - **Risk register update and mitigation strategies**
 - **Internal scrutiny report** (*Academies only – DfE requirement*)
 - **Review of funding agreement compliance** (*Academies only*)
 - **Business continuity and disaster recovery plans**
-

Safeguarding and Statutory Oversight

- **Annual safeguarding report**
 - **Single Central Record audit**
 - **Review of safer recruitment practices**
 - **Website compliance check**
 - *Academies:* DfE requirements
 - *Maintained:* DfE requirements
-

Review of Policies and Approval

A list with notes on academy-specific or maintained settings:

Policy	Notes
Safeguarding and Child Protection	Must reflect KCSIE 2025 updates
SEND Policy	Ensure statutory alignment and accessibility

Policy	Notes
Behaviour and Exclusions	Include trust-wide principles (academies) or DfE guidance (maintained)
Complaints Policy	DfE escalation routes (academies); DfE model (maintained)
Whistleblowing	Trust-level reporting (academies); DfE/LA procedures (maintained)
Health & Safety	Site-specific and trust-wide responsibilities
Data Protection and GDPR	DPO oversight and training; trust-level compliance (academies)
Charging and Remissions	Must reflect financial procedures and statutory guidance
Staff Grievance and Discipline	Align with safeguarding and professional standards
Governor Code of Conduct	Include expectations for trustees/LGBs (academies) and GBs (maintained)
Remote Learning/Blended Learning	If relevant, ensure accessibility and safeguarding

Governor Development and Engagement

- Skills audit of governing board and trustees
- Training needs analysis and Continuous Professional Development Planning (CPD)
- Review of governor attendance and engagement
- Feedback from link governors or monitoring visits
- Stakeholder engagement planning: surveys, forums, newsletter

Help us to help you

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 is important that you [keep your GIAS establishment record up to date](#) so that the DfE can always contact you if needed.

Governor and Clerk Training and Development ^P

Autumn 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

Course title	Day and date	Time	
Clerks briefing meetings.	Thursday 11th September 2025 Wednesday 22nd October 2025 Tuesday 2nd December 2025	At 10.00am- 11.00am	
Making sense of school data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of data available to governing boards (e.g., attainment, progress, behaviour, safeguarding) • Sources of data: school internal tracking, national benchmarks, Ofsted reports • The role of governors in monitoring school performance 	Thursday 2 nd October 2025	6.30pm- 8.00pm	Register and book a place here

<p>New Ofsted Inspection framework. What has changed? <i>Please note the revised date</i></p>	Wednesday 15 th October 2025	6.30pm-8.00pm	Register and book a place here
<p>Understanding & Monitoring the Primary School Curriculum: What governors need to know and ask.</p>	Thursday 23 rd October 2025	6.30pm-8.00pm	Register & book a place here
<p>Governance Essentials: A course for New School Governors Two-part course <i>We strongly recommend attending both parts of the course.</i></p>	<p>Part One Thursday 6th November</p> <p>Part Two Thursday 20th November</p>	<p>6.30pm-8.30pm</p> <p>6.30pm-8.30pm</p>	<p>Register & book part one here</p> <p>Register & book part two here</p>
<p>Strategic Oversight: School Finance Responsibilities for Governors and Trustees in Maintained and Academy Schools</p>	Wednesday 12 th November 2025	6.30pm-8.00pm	Register and book a place here
<p>Pupil Premium for Governors-Part One Understand how the Pupil Premium funding is allocated and monitored. <i>Note: please also book part two of the course on 11th February 2026</i></p>	Wednesday 12 th November 2025	6.30pm-8.00pm	Register and book a place here
<p>Dealing with concerns and complaints: What you need to know as a governor or clerk</p>	Thursday 13 th November 2025	6.30pm-8.00pm	Register and book a place here
<p>Pupil Premium for Governors-Part Two Understand how the Pupil Premium funding is allocated and monitored.</p>	Wednesday 11 th February 2026	6.30pm-8.00pm	Register and book a place here

Governor Support Service Ltd

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Edited material including Department of Education, Ofsted, National Governance Association ,Schoolsweek

