



GST Newsletter

Issue 15, September 2025

Introduction

Welcome back, we hope you managed to have a lovely break.

If you would like to refer back to any information in previous newsletters see the Governor Support Team [\(GST\) website](#).

Action

Westmorland and Furness School Governance Survey

This marks the launch of our first annual governance survey, designed to provide a richer, more localised insight into school governance across Westmorland and Furness. We know your time is valuable, so we've kept the format simple and quick to complete. The more responses we receive, the more meaningful and representative the findings will be.

[Link to complete the survey](#)

The deadline for responses is **26 October 2025**. Thank you for your continued support — it's greatly appreciated.

Chair, headteacher, clerk/governance professional and Local Authority (LA) governor details

As part of our duties within the LA, there may be occasions when we need to reach out directly to chairs, clerks, or governance professionals.

As highlighted in the most recent GST Newsletter, we are introducing an annual data collection each autumn term to ensure our records for these roles remain accurate and current.

We kindly ask that your clerk/governance professional notifies us of any mid-term resignations or new appointments throughout the year.

Can clerks/governance professionals please complete the [Annual Governing Board Membership Details request](#).

Please note that the deadline for submitting updated information is **31 January 2026**.



News/Updates

As well as the Department for Education (DfE) [School Governance](#) update, below are further items which may be of interest:

Finance

Reducing fraud in the education sector

[Information](#) to help schools, colleges and independent training providers manage the risk of fraud. DfE have also provided [guidance](#) on how to report fraud or financial irregularity, including suspicions.

Procurement advice for governing boards

The DfE has released new [guidance](#) on getting the best value from non-staff spend for those governing at schools and trusts to check if their setting is carrying out procurement compliantly and achieving value for money.

Schools budget support grant (SBSG)

[Guidance](#) for schools and LAs on the SBSG for financial year 2025 to 2026, to include details of the SBSG rates for academies to cover April to August 2026 and also the full-year equivalent rates that will be rolled into the national funding formula.

Breakfast club early adopters grant: 2025 to 2026 academic year

[Guidance](#) for schools and LAs on funding for the breakfast club early adopter schools from September 2025.

16 to 19 education: financial support for students

[Guidance](#) for institutions on the financial support young people may be able to access to help them participate in education and training.

Official development assistance: DfE spending statement

A [statement](#) on the DfEs contribution to official development assistance.

Academy trust financial management good practice guides

[DfEs collection of information](#) outlining good practice in academy trust financial management and assurance.

Letter to accounting officers in academy trusts: 25 June 2025

[Letter](#) from Andrew Thomas, Director of Funding and Financial Oversight at the DfE, to accounting officers in academies

Financial support and oversight for academy trusts

The [Academy Trust Handbook](#) for academy members, trustees, accounting officers, chief financial officers and auditors has been updated.

DfE has produced [guidance](#) for anyone who governs or manages an academy trust, on its approach to supporting and regulating academy trusts.

Also available is [Academies financial returns](#) with further information about the financial returns that academy trusts must submit to DfE.

Apply for funding for school admission appeal costs

[Details](#) of how academies can apply for funding to help pay for costs they have incurred hearing school admission appeals between September 2024 and October 2025.

Technology/Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Government tackles postcode lottery of school technology

Following the outcome of [consultation](#) on narrowing the digital divide in schools and colleges, the [government](#) outlines how it is going to roll out plans for the future of digital standards, to ensure no child is left behind.

DfE releases new AI guidance

The DfE has released new [guidance](#) to help schools make informed decisions about using AI. The guidance explores the potential of AI to reduce workload and enhance learning while also highlighting the importance of maintaining human oversight and discretion.

The DfE announced an additional £1 million investment to push the development of AI tools, specifically designed to support teachers with tasks such as marking and providing detailed, personalised feedback to students.

If new to the topic of AI, National Governance Associations (NGA) [webinar](#) an introduction to AI, its potential impact on education, and how it can support governance processes may be a good starting point.

There are a number of other resources that may be of interest:

- Safeguarding for schools (Andrew Hall), has pulled together a [list](#) of DfEs policy, guidance and practical tools together for convenience
- Join Dr Lucy Rycroft-Smith and Darren Macey for a discussion about the recent '[Using AI in education settings: support materials](#)' released by the DfE
- Actionable Intelligence: [AI in European Schools \(Dan Fitzpatrick, Free Webinar\)](#)

Pupil/Staff wellbeing/workload

Edurio release pupil happiness guide

A recent survey from Edurio revealed pupil happiness is declining, particularly in secondary and sixth-form settings.

Edurio has developed a [guide](#) (you will need to register to download), gathered from survey data and in-depth interviews with leaders, with ideas of how to:

- Define and measure wellbeing
- Develop strategies to foster inclusion and belonging
- Listen to pupil voice, and
- How staff, parents and leaders work together to create a thriving school culture

Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges

Find updated [resources](#) to help you develop a whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing.

Conversation guide for workload and wellbeing in schools and academy trusts

DfE have produced a [new conversation guide](#) to support meaningful conversations in schools and academy trusts about workload and wellbeing. The guide covers several areas, including marking, data, complaints and parental expectations

In addition DfE have a [toolkit of resources](#) around flexible working, including webinar training and support available.

Staffing and employment: guidance for schools

[Guidance for managing staff and employment issues](#) has been updated.

Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

SEND attainment gap continuing to widen

According to the latest [Annual Report](#) from the Education Policy Institute, reception children with SEND who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) are now, on average, 20.1 months behind their peers. This is the largest gap recorded since data collection began in 2013.

Assistive technology boost for children with SEND

The DfE has [announced](#) £1.7 million in funding towards 'lending libraries' across 32 LAs. These will enable schools to borrow and trial a range of devices to suit their pupils with SEND.

Disadvantaged

Free school meals eligibility extended

New [entitlement](#) to free school meals (FSM) for all children in households on Universal Credit comes into effect from the start of the 2026 school year.

DfE has updated the [Free school meals: guidance for schools and LAs](#).

New [research](#) has found that one in four pupils eligible for FSM in special schools are not taking them up due to "unmet dietary and eating needs". The Adapt-Ed study also found that one in five infant pupils in special schools are missing out on their universal FSM entitlement, compared to one in eight in mainstream schools.

NGA's [e-learning module](#), developed with the DfE, highlights the board's role in supporting an inclusive whole-school food offer.

Education Secretary's speech on Attendance at regional conference

The Education Secretary [addressed](#) 200 education leaders from the Midlands on the mission to drive up school attendance.

More recently the Education Secretary has issued a [press release](#) making a back-to-school call for parents to ensure children are in the classroom ready to learn.

Record attendance gains unlock over £2bn in future earnings

DfE have made a [press release](#) stating the impact of improved school attendance.

New research links school absence to poverty related barriers

16% of all 11–18-year-olds in the UK say that they have missed school at least once because they didn't have something they needed in order to attend, with this figure rising to 26% among children eligible for FSMs. This is according to a [survey](#) conducted by Child Poverty Action Group highlighting how poverty continues to prevent children from attending school regularly.

The associated costs with sending children to school, such as transport, can deepen parental poverty, reinforcing social isolation and limiting opportunities for both children and families. This is according to a recent [report](#) by the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for parents.

Read [NGA's poverty toolkit](#) to explore how you can support pupils in accessing all aspects of school life and for more resources on addressing poverty-related educational disadvantage.

Monitor your school attendance: user guide

The DfE's [guidance](#) for schools, academy trusts and LAs on using the monitor your school attendance tool has been updated.

Children missing education (CME)

DfE has updated [statutory guidance](#) for LAs and schools on how they work together to identify and support CME to receive a suitable education.

The update aims to address inconsistencies in practice and add clarity, including on schools and LAs working together to identify and support CME. The document is now issued as statutory for schools as well as LAs. Existing legislation already requires schools to carry out these responsibilities. Also added is a summary of responsibilities, and a policy and procedure checklist.

Equality Act 2010 and disabled pupils, A guide for governors and trustees

The Council for Disabled Children (with DfE) have published a [guide](#) for school governors, academy trustees and others with responsibility for schools' duties in the Equality Act.

The guide is designed to support understanding in how well your school is meeting your duties to disabled pupils. It sets out the individually owed duties and the more strategic duties; and it supports a conversation between executive leaders and governing bodies and boards of trustees about the evidence they need in order to understand how well the duties are being met in their school.

Partnerships for inclusion of neurodiversity in schools (PINS)

A [national pilot programme](#) designed to improve outcomes for neurodivergent pupils in mainstream primary schools. The DfE's updated [guidance](#) sets out the expectations for the PINS programme.

Pupil premium

[Information](#) on pupil premium funding, how school leaders can use it effectively and pupil premium strategy statements.

Early Years

DfE launches strategy to improve early years and family services

The Education Secretary's keynote [speech](#) at the RISE conference in Sunderland last term on Reception Year Quality, sets out the case for early intervention and school readiness reform.

The government has [announced](#) a new plan to drive up the quality and accessibility of early years education and boost children's life chances.

[‘Giving every child the best start in life’](#) outlines how the government will improve child development and ensure that all children have the chance to achieve and thrive. Backed by £1.5 billion of funding, the first stage of the strategy will see tax free payments of £4,500 offered to attract early years teachers in disadvantaged areas.

The strategy also aims for Ofsted to inspect all new early years providers within 18 months of opening, and that all providers be inspected at least once every four years, as opposed to every six years currently.

It is also part of the government's ambition that 75% of 5-year-olds in England have a good level of development by 2028.

The [Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\)](#) statutory framework sets the standards that school and childcare providers must meet for the learning, development and care of children from birth to 5, the new version came into effect 1 September 2025.

Also as part of the Giving every child the best start in life, up to 1,000 [Best Start Family Hubs](#) to be rolled out across the country to provide wide-ranging help for families, such as parenting and early development.

School Based Nurseries - Phase 2

For the attention of the Headteacher and Chair of Governors

As part of the governments drive to give every child the best start in life, from **Monday 22nd September until 5pm on Thursday 11th December 2025**, state-funded primary-phase schools will be able to apply for **up to £150,000** of capital funding to repurpose surplus space within their premises to create or expand on-site nurseries. The government have committed £45 million to create a further 300 new or expanded best start school-based nurseries - offering up to 7,000 more places - from September 2026.

These nurseries can be school-run or delivered by private and voluntary providers or childminders on the school's site. They can also cater for any early year's age group, providing there is local demand.

For more information see the [Guidance for School-Based Nursery Grant](#).

Application Process

Schools must:

Download the LA approval form

- Discuss the proposal with the LA to confirm its suitability
- Share the form with the LA for completion
- Once complete, upload the form on the online application service as part of the application
- Role of LA

To ensure a smooth and effective application process, all applicants must work in close partnership with their LA from the outset. Early conversations between schools and LAs are essential to assess the suitability of the proposed project and to determine how much effort the school should invest in completing the application. LAs can also advise schools on Ofsted registration requirements.

To meet eligibility requirements, **all applicants** must upload a completed LA approval form to the online application service before submitting their full application. By signing the form, the LA confirms its support for the proposal, allowing the application to proceed to the assessment stage once submitted.

It is the applicant's responsibility to initiate early discussions with their LA, provide them with the LA approval form, and upload the completed form to the online application service. For more information, please refer to the [School-based Nursery Capital Grant 2025 to 2026, information for applicants](#).

In order for the LA to complete the approval form in the required time scales, you will receive a Microsoft forms link to outline your proposed plan from 22nd September 2025

If you have any further questions, then please don't hesitate to contact me on the contact details below.

Registration of interest

If you are a primary school or a maintained nursery school interested in opening or expanding a SBN, but are not eligible or ready to apply for phase 2, register your interest via the registration of interest form. This will be available from 22 September 2025 to 5pm 11 December 2025. After the deadline the form will be closed for registrations.

In addition to providing your school and contact details, you will be asked to briefly explain your interest in a capital grant for school-based nursery provision, and why you did not apply in phase 2. This information may be shared with your LA to support planning.

Ann Breeze, Early Years Service Manager, anne.breeze@westmorlandandfurness.go.uk.

Safeguarding

The new Westmorland & Furness Safeguarding Children Partnership Websites

The new [Westmorland & Furness Safeguarding Children Partnership website \(WFSCP\)](#) is now live.

The WFSCP is a multi-agency body dedicated to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children across the Westmorland and Furness area, covering the footprint of Westmorland and Furness Council.

The new website will provide clear information, resources, and guidance to support professionals, families, and the wider community in working together to keep children safe.

Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE)

[Statutory guidance](#) for schools and colleges on safeguarding children and safer recruitment.

Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) Identity checks

New DBS identity-checking guidance came into effect on 22 April 2025, with a transition period until 1 November 2025. While the three-route structure remains, several important updates mean schools must act now.

A key change is that Route 1 no longer requires a document showing the applicant's current address, instead, three documents confirming name and date of birth are sufficient (for example, a biometric passport, a photocard driving licence, and a birth certificate), this only applies to Route 1. In cases where documents don't confirm the current address, schools will still need to verify it through other appropriate means.

The guidance also strengthens rules on who can verify identity (relatives, friends, or household members cannot act as ID checkers), encourages the use of digital identity checks, and requires schools to retain ID check records for a minimum of two years. Although KCSIE does not specify a fixed retention period, the recommendation is to retain documents used to evidence identity for the duration of a person's employment, plus six years. This aligns with DfEs [Data Protection in schools, record keeping and management](#).

Next steps for governing boards:

- Review record-keeping systems to ensure compliance by 1 November 2025
- Have all staff been updated on new requirements.

Full guidance available [here](#).

Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework

In the newly updated [EYFS statutory framework](#) for group and school based providers includes:

- In every setting, a practitioner must be designated to take lead responsibility for safeguarding children. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is responsible for liaison with local statutory children's services agencies, and with the Local Safeguarding Partners (LSPs). All practitioners must be alert to any issues of concern in the child's life at home or elsewhere
- Training must be renewed every two years. Providers may consider whether any staff need to undertake annual refresher training during any two-year period to help maintain basic skills and keep up to date with any changes to safeguarding procedures or as a result of any safeguarding concerns that occur in the setting.

Academy trust chair: apply for a suitability check

Information and forms for [academy trust chairs of trustees to apply for a suitability check](#), including an enhanced DBS check.

Regional Prevent education co-ordinators (RPECs)

The DfEs [RPECs](#) support and improve Prevent delivery in each region of England. Their role includes implementing Prevent Duty responsibilities across schools, further education and higher education settings.

The [RPECs offer virtual training sessions](#), one of the sessions has been designed by DfE for school governors to understand their responsibilities and the importance of the [Prevent duty](#). They have added new dates for virtual training sessions for the academic year 2025 to 2026.

Martyn's Law and Protective Security

Martyn's Law – formally the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 – is named in memory of Martyn Hett, one of the 22 people killed in the 2017 Manchester Arena bombing. The law introduces new duties to help reduce harm from terrorist attacks.

All UK schools, including early years, primary, secondary and further education, are classed as 'standard tier' premises and have two years to prepare before enforcement begins in 2027.

Schools will need to:

- Appoint a 'responsible person' to oversee compliance,
- Register their premises with the Security Industry Authority (SIA), and
- Develop proportionate procedures such as lockdown and evacuation plans.

To prepare, schools can:

- Identify a suitable responsible person
- Review and test emergency procedures
- Access the free ACT for Education e-learning module
- Audit visitor access and site security.

Many of these steps already feature in the DfEs [Protective Security and Preparedness for Education Settings guidance](#). This non statutory guidance offers practical templates, SEND considerations and low cost strategies that align closely with Martyn's Law.

Further resources available:

- The Home Office has released:
 - A [short video](#) to help understand the scope and requirements of the new Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act, known as Martyn's Law
 - A [factsheet](#) about Martyn's Law
 - DfE, [How Martyn's Law will affect education settings](#)
- LGfL, [Safeguarding Blog](#)

Cybersecurity: Academy Trust Handbook 2025

The [Academy Trust Handbook 2025](#) introduces a clear and uncompromising stance on ransomware. In the Cybercrime section (6.14 and 6.15) the Handbook states:

"Academy trusts must also be aware of the risk of cybercrime, put in place proportionate controls and take appropriate action where a cyber security incident has occurred. Trusts should take appropriate action to meet DfE's cyber security standards, which were developed to help them improve their resilience against cyber-attacks."

Trusts must not pay any cyber ransom demands. DfE supports the National Crime Agency's recommendation not to encourage, endorse, or condone the payment of ransom demands. Payment of ransoms has no guarantee of restoring access or services and is likely to result in repeat incidents.'

Proactive readiness steps

To prepare for potential service disruptions, schools and trusts should:

- **Test Incident Response Plans** - Develop and annually test a clear plan for operating during cyber incidents, even without core systems.
- **Secure Offline Backups** - Regularly back up critical data to isolated, secure locations to prevent loss during breaches.
- **Train Staff on Cyber Threats** - Provide ongoing training in phishing, data handling, and cyber hygiene, with clear reporting procedures

Filtering and Monitoring for 2025 – UK Safer Internet Centre

Earlier in 2025, the UK Safer Internet Centre (UKSIC) has produced an [updated set of definitions](#) for appropriate filtering and monitoring. These definitions work to uplift educational settings and improve providers engagement with filtering and monitoring practice, in an increasingly complex webspace.

Relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education

Further to an earlier consultation DfE have [announced](#) the release of [revised statutory guidance on RSE and health education](#).

You may find the NGAs webinar on how to [safeguard pupils against extreme views and behaviours](#) useful.

OFSTED

Ofsted confirms new look inspections

Ofsted has confirmed its changes to school inspections, moving the system to a new “report card” format for every school from November 2025. Single-word judgements are replaced by a new five-point grading scale across six to eight judgement areas, and a binary judgement for safeguarding.

Governance is more prominent in this framework and is included in a refined “leadership and governance” evaluation area, while “inclusion” is also added as a standalone evaluation area for the first time. At the same time, the DfE have also explained their updated approach to accountability, including the introduction of school profiles and additional improvement support for struggling schools.

Changes to the inspection process are detailed in a new [Education Inspection Framework \(EIF\)](#) and accompanying [inspection toolkits](#).

Ofsted sets out measures to ensure steady and assured start to inspections under the renewed framework

Ofsted has [announced](#) several measures to reassure education providers about the November roll-out of inspections under the renewed inspection framework.

This includes an announcement of a sector [engagement programme](#) to ready education providers for November start to inspections. Full details of the webinar programme and how to sign up are available at: [Education inspection framework: engagement programme](#).

Ofsted’s approach to mental health and well-being: updates

Matthew Purves, National Director of Ofsted Academy, on Ofsted’s [renewed approach](#) to mental health and well-being, following the findings and recommendations of the coroner’s inquest into the death of headteacher Ruth Perry.

Big Listen action monitoring reports

[Ofsted's monitoring reports](#) on commitments made in the Big Listen and its response to Dame Christine Gilbert's independent learning review.

Dame Christine Gilbert announced as Chair of Ofsted

The next Ofsted chair has been [announced](#) as Dame Christine Gilbert, replacing Sir Hamid Patel (Interim Chair) as of 1 September 2025.

Ofsted's equality objectives 2023 to 2027

[Equality, diversity and inclusion objectives that Ofsted will focus on from 2023 to 2027.](#)

Ofsted Report on AI Use in Early Adopter Schools and Colleges – Spring Term 2025

In spring 2025, Ofsted conducted a [research project investigating how 21 'early adopter' schools and FE colleges in England are using artificial intelligence \(AI\).](#)

Commissioned by DfE, the study aimed to build a clearer picture of how educational settings are approaching AI adoption.

Other

Impact of UK climate change risk on the delivery of education

In response to an independent assessment, the DfE has [reviewed](#) how climate change risk could impact education delivery.

The updated [Academy Trust Handbook](#) reiterates the requirement for every trust to appoint a Sustainability Lead and have an active Climate Action Plan (CAP) in place by 2025.

Data protection in schools

The [policies and processes](#) schools and multi-academy trusts need to protect personal data and respond effectively to a personal data breach have been updated with information about the Data Use and Access Act 2025.

National Year of Reading launched to boost literacy

Starting in January 2026, the DfE and National Literature Trust are launching a [National Year of Reading](#) aiming to reverse the decline in children that read for pleasure.

The National Wraparound Childcare Programme

What is wraparound childcare?

Wraparound childcare is the term used by government to describe childcare provided outside standard school hours, before and after school, during term time. Whilst it can also refer to provision in the school holidays, currently the national wraparound childcare programme does not include holiday provision. The ambition has been to make wraparound available for every primary school. As a childcare service, it is different from out of school activities, or school clubs, which are less frequent and can be one-off activities. Around 60 percent of primary schools across England already offer wraparound childcare, both before and after school.

Background of the National Wraparound Childcare Programme.

The National Wraparound Childcare Programme is part of the childcare reforms introduced in the 2023 Spring Budget. The government aimed to ensure that by 2026-2027, all parents and carers of primary school-aged children, from reception to year six, in England will be able to access childcare in their local area during term time from 8am to 6pm.

In 2023, the government announced up to £289 million in start-up funding to assist LAs, schools, and providers in England in establishing or expanding childcare services outside regular school hours from 8am to 6pm, which parents of primary school aged children can pay to use to support them to work.

Could you benefit from the Wraparound Childcare Programme Grant funding?

- Grant funding is available until March 2026, to be used for academic year 2025-2026
- The programme is designed to fund the initial setup or expansion of wraparound provision where there is clear demand and remove the financial risk of setting up or expanding wraparound provision where sufficient demand is not guaranteed to sustain provision from the start but where sufficient demand may be built over time as parents are assured of the supply of places. The funding is intended to create new places and not to sustain existing provision

Wraparound childcare for school governors

School governors play a crucial role in ensuring that wraparound childcare is accessible and well-structured for primary school-aged children. They are responsible for:

- Ensuring schools have wraparound childcare on-site unless there is a reasonable justification not to do so
- Responding to community needs for wraparound childcare by adhering to the right to request guidance
- Supporting the headteacher in determining the most appropriate model of wraparound childcare provision
- Establishing and agreeing the vision and aims of the provision with stakeholders, including parents, governors, trustees, staff, and private, voluntary and independent (PVI) providers
- School governors should be aware of the legal framework, roles and responsibilities outlined in the [guidance](#) to effectively support the implementation of wraparound childcare within their schools
- If your school does not have wraparound in place, has your board discussed/considered if wraparound is a workable option for your school?

Governing Board reminders – Autumn Term

Annual review of constitutional arrangements

It is seen as best practice for governing boards to review their constitutional arrangements annually. This includes ensuring the current constitution (Instrument of government for LA maintained schools, Articles of Association for academies, MATS), is still fit for purpose but also as strategic leaders, looking ahead to future proofing the school for future sustainability.

Governing boards can look at a number of options for their schools to increase efficiency, effectiveness which can contribute to the best outcomes for the children and young people in your schools. Examples of other structures for information/consideration:

- [School organisation, making organisational changes to LA maintained schools](#)
- [Collaboration of schools \(LA maintained\)](#)
- [Federation of schools \(LA maintained\)](#)
- [Executive headship](#)
- [Converting to an academy \(LA maintained\)](#)
- [Academies: making significant changes or closure by agreement](#)
- [Single Academy Trust joining a Multi Academy Trust](#)
- [Moving to another Multi Academy Trust](#)

Headteacher Performance Management

A reminder of the process (LA maintained schools) as we head into a new academic year.

- Performance management cycle:
- Governing board appoints appraisal panel members
- Governing board appoints external adviser
- Appraisal:
 - Review performance against objectives
 - Set new objectives
 - Complete appraisal report, copy provided to headteacher and panel
 - Panel makes pay recommendation. The panel's recommendation, and their reasons for it, should be provided to the committee responsible for pay decisions or as outlined in the schools pay appraisal policy.
- Mid-year review

If you want to find out more about headteacher performance management, the following resources may be helpful:

- [DfE – Headteacher performance: effective management](#)
- [DfE – Headteacher standards](#)
- [DfE – School teachers' pay and conditions: guidance](#)
- [NGA Learning Link – Management of workload and wellbeing: the governance role](#)
- [NGA webinar – Impactful executive leader performance management](#)

Admission arrangements

Voluntary Aided and foundation schools, consult if it has not been changed for seven years, in line with the [School Admissions Code](#).

Safeguarding

Review safeguarding arrangements and procedures in line with [KCSIE 2025](#).

Staff Appraisal

Review appraisal policies/procedures.

Pupil Premium Strategy Statement

All schools are required to publish a pupil premium strategy statement on their website, 31 December each academic year, using the [DfE template](#).

PE and Sport Premium

Governors should monitor how the funding is being spent and determine how it fits into school improvement plans and assess the impact. NGA have produced a [PE and sport premium monitoring tool](#) which may be informative. In addition:

- Schools must spend the PE and sport premium funding in full within the academic year it has been allocated
- Schools cannot roll over any unused funding into the following academic year
- From 2025, all primary schools need to complete the digital expenditure reporting return for the 2024 to 2025 academic year
- School must publish on its website (by 31 July 2025) a report detailing how it has spent its PE and sport premium funding allocation. Note: If schools publish the digital expenditure return form downloads on their website, ensure converted to HTML format for accessibility, to meet PE and sport premium reporting requirements, they should keep the previous year's written report on the school's website. This allows comparisons to be made.

SEND policy and SEN information report

All schools are required to have a SEND policy and SEN information report as detailed in the [SEND Code of Practice](#). Both documents must be approved by the full governing board and reviewed annually, any changes to the information occurring during the year should be updated as soon as possible

All governors should read and understand chapter six of the SEND code of practice.

Gender Pay Gap

Any employer with 250 or more employees on a specific date each year (the 'snapshot date') must report their [gender pay gap data](#).

You must report and publish your gender pay gap information within a year of your snapshot date. You must do this for every year that you have 250 or more employees on your snapshot date.

The deadlines each year are:

- 30 March – for most public authority employers
- 4 April – for private, voluntary and all other public authority employers

School Website

DfE requires all schools to publish certain information on their websites:

- [What maintained schools must or should publish online - GOV.UK](#)
- [What academies and further education colleges must or should publish online - GOV.UK](#)

As a governing board, when was the last time you monitored your school website for compliance?

Development/Training

Explore NGA Learning Link Modules This Autumn

As we step into the new term, it's the perfect time to strengthen your governance skills. Below is a selection of NGA Learning Link modules designed to support and inspire you in your role this term. Whether you are new to governance or looking to deepen your expertise, there's something here for everyone:

- [An introduction to the English education system](#)
- [An introduction to the strategic role of governance](#)
- [Executive leaders performance management](#)
- [Recruiting a senior executive leader](#)
- [Management of workload and wellbeing: the governance role](#)
- [How to: run an effective admissions appeals panel](#)
- [Essential Safeguarding 2025-26](#)
- [Pupil premium](#)
- [The governance of SEND](#)

New e-learning module: Help protect your school from cyber threats

NGA has partnered with [Secure Schools](#) to develop a brand new e-learning module, [Cyber security and governance](#) covering the governing board's role in protecting schools from cyber threats.

This 30-minute module will help you recognise the common cyber threats facing schools and trusts, understand the boards' responsibilities as directed by the DfE and UK General Protection Data Regulations (GDPR), and will provide you with practical steps to take and questions to ask.

Governor Support Team Virtual Sessions 2025 to 2026

To support school governors/trustees to drive school development and deliver effective governance, we have a programme of planned virtual training sessions available for the 2025 to 2026 academic year listed below.

Booking: Places for these events can be booked via SLA online.

If you have any issues accessing [SLA online](#), please email the School Development Team at school.development@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk to book your place.

Introduction to governance

For newly appointed/elected governors, trustees, associate members and local academy committee members as an introduction to their new role, to help build confidence, outline expectations of the board and board members, and to consider the next steps in the development of their governance career.

Dates:

- 21 October, 6pm to 7.30pm
- 11 February 2025, 5pm to 6.30pm
- 19 May 2025, 4pm to 5.30pm

Looking forward to inspection!

This session outlines the process of an Ofsted Inspection, particularly useful for those who have not yet experienced an inspection and to consider and reflect their involvement and contribution to the process.

May be useful to all board members in light of the recent changes to the Ofsted inspection process.

Dates:

- 10 February 2026, 7pm to 7.30pm
- 2 June 2026, 5pm to 6.30pm

Introduction to the role of clerk/governance professional

For newly appointed Clerks, Governance Professionals as an introduction to their new role to help build confidence, outline expectations, and to consider the next steps in the development of their role.

Dates:

- 22 October 2025, 2024, 6pm to 7.30pm
- 12 February 2026, 5pm to 6.30pm

New: Governance recruitment, induction and retention

Explore how effective recruitment and induction of governors, associate members, trustees, and local academy committee members can enhance volunteer retention and support the overall impact of school governance.

We will be sharing practical ideas, useful resources, and actionable next steps to help governing boards refine their approaches to attracting, onboarding, and retaining dedicated volunteers.

Dates:

- 4 November 2025, 6pm to 7.30pm
- 24 February 2026, 5pm to 6.30pm
- 20 May 2026, 4pm to 5.30pm

New: Governance succession planning

This session provides delegates with a greater understanding of the board's role in securing board leadership as part of the boards role in fulfilling its strategic responsibilities. It will also consider ways in which to strengthen the governance team to develop/improve succession planning.

Dates:

- 23 October 2025, 6pm to 7.30pm
- 26 February 2026, 5pm to 6.30pm

Clerk/Governance Professional Cluster Group 2025 to 2026

Dates, topics and links below for sessions for the next academic year. No need to book and free to attend for any clerk/governance professional who would like to attend.

Dates:**5 November 2025, 6pm to 7.30pm**

Focus on monitoring and evaluation

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 311 584 174 746 5

Passcode: qy649tX6

25 February 2026, 5pm to 6.30pm

Focus on school website, governance compliance

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 318 509 118 064 8

Passcode: ih6aQ3JE

3 June 2026, 4pm to 5.30pm

Focus on minutes

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 331 730 488 999 0

Passcode: Ep76Xm3i

Chair's Briefings

Following the inaugural Chairs' Briefing last term, led by Isobel Booler, Assistant Director of Education and Inclusion, dates for this academic year are listed below. These sessions will serve as a valuable platform for sharing key information and updates from the LA. Attendees will also have the opportunity to hear from various speakers on a range of topics and areas impacting schools.

Dates:

- 11 November 2025, 6pm to 7pm
- 4 March 2026, 6pm to 7pm
- 9 June 2026, 6pm to 7pm

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) – Westmorland and Furness

I attended the SACRE session around Improving the provision and quality of collective worship. SACRE provided a copy of their [slides](#) to share, which includes a collective worship policy template.

SACRE are running another virtual session, specifically for governors on 23 April 2026, 6pm to 8pm. Booking and further details for this session can be found at [SACRE Update for school governors](#).

You can access their website at [Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education | Westmorland and Furness Council](#), they also hope to include copies of their newsletters on the website in the near future.

School to school support

The GST wish to remind any governors/trustees/clerks/governance professionals who feel they may be in a position to provide governance support to other boards on a voluntary basis, to contact the GST for an informal conversation.

Please contact either your Governor Support Assistant or drop an email to GST.mailbox.WAF@cumbria.gov.uk to discuss further or if you would just like a little bit more detail.

GST Contact Details

The GST continues to offer advice, support, and guidance, specific to your boards needs and can be contacted as follows:

Jane Lees

Governor Support Assistant

Email:

- jane.lees@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk
- GSTT.mailbox.WAF@cumbria.gov.uk

Telephone: **01228 226925**

Mobile: **07768 027 244**