



GST Newsletter

Issue 17, January 2026

Introduction

Welcome to first Governor Support Team (GST) Newsletter of 2026, where there are already some first signs of Spring arriving with spring bulbs starting to make an appearance, spot the snowdrops!

If you would like to refer back to any information in previous newsletters, please visit the [GST website](#).

Action

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.

In September, we announced the introduction of our annual data collection each autumn term, to ensure our records for these roles remain accurate and current.

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

Many thanks to all have responded already, for those have not yet responded please note that the deadline for submitting updated information is **31 January 2026**.

We kindly ask that clerks/governance professionals also continue to notify us of any mid-term resignations or new appointments to these roles throughout the year.

New DfE guidance on mobile phone policies

The Department for Education (DfE) has announced new [non-statutory guidance for schools on the use of mobile phones](#). This comes amid growing concerns about the impact of mobile phones on children's wellbeing, alongside increasing calls to raise the minimum age for accessing social media platforms.

As part of this shift, Ofsted has produced a blog on [What the government's updated guidance on mobile phones means for school inspections](#) from April 2026.

Governing bodies may want to review the current behaviour policy to check how clearly mobile phone expectations are set out and whether they reflect the updated guidance.



New parental complaints guidance published

New [guidance](#) has been published to address a sharp rise in parental complaints, with a focus on rebuilding trust and encouraging calmer, more constructive dialogue between parents and schools.

The guidance explains a simple five-step way for parents to raise issues in the right way. It asks families to tell the difference between basic feedback, real concerns and formal complaints, and advises them not to be hostile, make personal accusations, escalate problems too quickly or use AI to write complaints. Its main aim is to improve how parents and schools work together before changes to the complaints system are introduced in the upcoming Schools White Paper.

News/Updates/Information

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

All schools

Effective governance resources

The DfE have published the following guidance: [Effective governance resources - GOV.UK](#), which covers areas for governing boards to focus on in order to develop and maintain effective governance.

One of the areas is '[Working with governance professionals](#)' and contains links to various resources which you may find useful.

Schools: statutory guidance collection

The DfE's [collection of statutory guidance publications](#) for schools and local authorities.

Government sets Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) removal deadline

The Education Secretary, Bridget Phillipson, has [announced](#) that all schools facing issues with RAAC will have building works commence by 2029.

To further address the backlog in school maintenance going forward, the DfE announced plans to release a long-term estates strategy during a session with members of the Education Select Committee.

School rebuilding programme

Further Information about the [school rebuilding programme](#), which carries out major rebuilding and refurbishment projects at schools and sixth-form colleges, has been updated with notice of the next nomination round, which will open in early 2026.

Managing older school buildings

New sections have been added to the [Managing older school buildings guidance](#) to help school building owners and maintenance staff identify building systems and prioritise maintenance and repair of their school estate.

Curriculum and assessment review

The government has set out [plans](#) to bring the curriculum into the modern day and help young people step into the future with the skills for life and work.

Responding to the recommendations of Professor Becky Francis's [Curriculum and Assessment Review](#) (5 November 2025), the government has [confirmed](#) steps to ensure every young person has a cast-iron grip on the basics of reading, science and maths, alongside the knowledge and skills required for life and work over the next decade – raising school standards and boosting opportunity under the Plan for Change. Key recommendations include:

- Introduction of a core body of citizenship content at primary, and a broader mix at secondary including financial and media literacy, and environmental sustainability.
- Evidence-based guidance on how the curriculum and teaching approaches can be adapted for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- Reducing overall exam time by at least 10%, and more where possible.

In response to the governments launch of the independent Curriculum and Assessment Review and the [Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper](#) the Secretary of State for Education, Bridget Phillipson, has [written](#) to Ofqual welcoming their [Regulating on-screen assessment consultation](#) and outlining the steers she wants Ofqual to take into account in determining its proposed regulatory approach.

Additional sources of further information:

- [National Governance Association's \(NGA\) Blog](#)
- [NGA, The Curriculum and Assessment Review explained webinar](#)
- [The Education hub, What you need to know about the changes to the National Curriculum](#)
- Youth Sport Trust Response [New curriculum can start new chapter for PE, school sport and play, say sector leaders - Youth Sport Trust](#)
- Association of physical education response [New curriculum can start New Chapter for PE, School Sport and Play, say Sector Leaders](#)
- Dr Vicky Randall Blog, [A Future Ready Primary PE Curriculum: Towards Clearer Purpose, Broader Focus, and Stronger Foundations that inspire every child to move, grow and thrive](#)

National Year of Reading launched

As part of the National Year of Reading, DfE and the National Literacy Trust have launched the '[Go All In' campaign](#), encouraging people of all ages to rediscover reading for pleasure. This follows data revealing only one in three 8 to 18 year olds saying they enjoy reading.

The campaign aims to bring together families, schools, libraries, businesses and other community organisations to connect reading with everyday passions such as football, music, food, film and gaming.

The DfE Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy

The [sustainability and climate change strategy for education](#) states: "By 2025, all education settings will have nominated a sustainability lead and put in place a climate action plan".

The [Sustainability leadership and climate action plans in education guidance](#) has been updated to provide greater clarity on the climate action plan template and sustainability leadership structure, and to add an additional case-study from Manchester Metropolitan University.

Other resources you may find useful:

- NGA Learning Link (NGA LL) module has been refreshed: [Environmental sustainability: the governance role](#)
- [Greener Schools Index](#) (GSI) is a free tool self-assessment tool designed to support all schools, however big or small, and at whatever stage they are on their net zero journey. The second phase of GSI is now open and will help you assess your current level of climate action and find areas for further development

Government acts to tackle rising childhood obesity epidemic

The government issued a [press release](#) underlining its commitment to get children healthier and more active following new figures revealing the scale of the childhood obesity problem.

The '[School food standards practical guide](#)' and '[School food: guidance for governors](#)' have been updated, adding a link to the NGA LL online training course on [school food for governors and trustees](#).

School uniforms

Alongside recent updates to statutory guidance on the [cost of school uniforms](#), the DfE has also renewed its [non-statutory guidance](#) that supports schools in [developing and implementing their school uniform policy](#). New suggestions include considering:

- Points of contact for families and pupils who need support with uniform
- Whether to make your position on political impartiality clear in the uniform policy, including rules around badges and similar items
- How to mitigate any negative impact on pupils with SEND
- How to reduce peer pressure to wear designer sportswear and avoid extra cost for parents

Attendance

A [press release](#) has been issued where the Secretary of Education has announced that schools in England are to be issued with Artificial Intelligence (AI)-generated targets for minimum pupil attendance, as part of its continuing efforts to tackle absence in the country's classrooms.

New attendance expectations revealed

Minister for Early Education, Olivia Bailey, has [written to governors and trustees](#) explaining the introduction of Attendance Baseline Improvement Expectations (ABIEs). The DfE will use AI to curate these school-specific expectations for each academic year based on historical data, location, pupil needs and deprivation.

Schools who consistently or significantly miss ABIEs will be signposted to further support like joining an attendance and behaviour hub.

New guidance on behaviour and attendance hubs

The DfE has published new [guidance](#) on how its Regional improvement for standards and excellence (RISE) Behaviour and Attendance Hubs will work, with schools set to receive either regional or enhanced support. Led by schools with strong practice, the hubs are designed to help strengthen attendance and behaviour systems through shared expertise.

Also see statutory guidance [Working together to improve school attendance](#).

Children in care

[The Governors' Guide to Children in Care 2025](#) has just been relaunched by BECOME, a national charity for children in care and care leavers. The guide gives key information, practical questions and is free to download.

In addition the [Government extends free NHS services for care leavers](#) with the provision of free prescriptions, dental and eyecare services up to the age of 25.

Net capacity assessment programme for primary schools

Find out about the [net capacity assessment \(NCA\) programme](#), when school site visits will take place and how to read your NCA report.

In addition there is a [NCA tool](#) available to help measure net pupil capacity in schools, with guidance on the methodology.

School inspection data summary report guide

This [guide](#) provides an overview of the inspection data summary report (IDSR) for primary and secondary schools, including schools with a sixth form, and gives guidance on how to interpret the data. The guide has been updated with provisional 2025 key stage 4 data.

For leaders and governors/trustees, the IDSR offers a structured overview that can support internal discussions and help inform ongoing monitoring.

National school breakfast club programme

The [National school breakfast club programme](#) has been updated to reflect the national rollout of free breakfast clubs.

In addition [guidance](#) on setting up and running free breakfast clubs, including specific guidance for schools joining phase 1 of the national rollout from April 2026, is available.

Statistics: multiplication tables check attainment

[Statistics on the multiplication tables check](#) with breakdowns by pupil characteristics, at national and LA level. Information on the 2025 multiplication tables check, including breakdowns by pupil characteristics, at national and LA level has been added.

Suspensions and permanent exclusions

[Statistics on pupils who are excluded from school](#) have been updated with [Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England: autumn term 2024 to 2025](#).

Child Poverty Strategy

The government has released its [Child Poverty Strategy](#), with a [press release](#) stating the aim to lift an estimated 550,000 children out of poverty by 2030. Key measures include confirmation that children in households receiving Universal Credit will become eligible for free school meals from September 2026.

Pupil premium

[Pupil premium](#) is funding to improve education outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in schools in England. Information on pupil premium funding, how school leaders can use it effectively and pupil premium strategy statements. The 'Pupil premium: overview' has been updated with funding rates and payment dates for the 2026 to 2027 financial year.

School Support Staff Negotiating Body

On 18 December 2025, the [Employment Rights Act](#) became law. The Act covers a range of workforce measures including changes to pay, time off work, dismissal and trade union rights. It also establishes the [School Support Staff Negotiating Body \(SSSNB\)](#) which will start operating later this year with a remit to negotiate pay and conditions.

The changes will be implemented over a two-year period and will impact all employers. Many of the details will be confirmed through secondary legislation and government guidance. DfE have produced a [fact sheet](#) which you may find useful.

Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill

The [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill](#) has been updated with policy [summary notes](#) and [impact assessments](#), to reflect the new government measures tabled at Lords Report stage along with a small number of other changes in line with amendments.

Communicating successfully with parents and carers: The experiences of high-performing trusts and schools

This [guide](#) blends insights from Edurio's national dataset and three in-depth case studies: Nova Education Trust, Ted Wragg Trust and Big Education Trust. The case studies illustrate the habits and cultures of schools and trusts that communicate very successfully with parents and carers. Four principles emerge consistently in the experiences of high-performing schools and trusts:

- Clarity and coherence – Parents/carers know what communications to expect and where to find them
- Two-way communication – Parents and carers are listened to and consulted regularly, as well as informed
- Respect and trust – Every parent/carer is recognised as bringing vital experience and a shared desire to support their child and the school
- Follow-through and feedback – Schools demonstrate that listening leads to prompt action.

Research and surveys

Below are a number of sources of information recently released for your interest/information:

- [Pupil experiences in school: academic year 2024 to 2025](#)
- [Technology in schools survey report: 2024 to 2025](#)
- [Working lives of teachers and leaders: wave 4](#)
- [Parent, pupil and learner voice: omnibus surveys for 2024 to 2025](#)
- [National behaviour survey report: 2024 to 2025 academic year](#)
- [NGA Three strands of leadership](#)
- [Area-based Education Partnership Alliance's School partnerships driving improvement](#)
- [NGA Creating connections report](#)

Early Years

DfE have announced a [Record £9.5 billion early years investment](#) next year to help families access affordable childcare and boost growth by supporting parents back into work

The [Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) profile results: 2024 to 2025](#) annual statistics report on teacher assessments of children's development at the end of the EYFS, typically the summer term of the academic year in which a child turns 5 (reception year).

You can [compare your good level of development \(GLD\) data](#), as a governing board do you know how your early years provision is performing compared to national figures.

Secondary and Post-16

Government modernises exam records with new app

DfE have [announced](#) that every year 11 student in England to be able to see their GCSE exam results on a new app from summer 2026.

Post-16 education and skills white paper

The [Post-16 education and skills white paper](#) sets out the governments plan to educate and train the workforce of the future and give people the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. Working with businesses, colleges, universities and the wider skills sector – and guided by their [industrial strategy](#) to break down barriers to opportunity.

Further education corporations and sixth-form college corporations governance guide

The [Further education \(FE\) corporations and sixth-form college corporations governance guide](#) has been updated to reflect the new Ofsted inspection regime and changes to the FE Commissioner role.

Multi Academy Trusts

Minister for School Standards shares message of thanks for Trustees' Week

To celebrate Trustees' Week (3 to 7 November 2025), Georgia Gould OBE MP, Minister for School Standards, has shared [a message of thanks](#) via the NGA to trustees and governors across the country.

Reflecting on her own time as a school governor, she praised the "quiet kind of leadership" that boards bring – leadership that shapes children's futures and strengthens school communities.

"Your dedication and expertise make a real difference – supporting school leaders, driving improvement, and helping every child to thrive."

The Minister also reaffirmed the government's commitment to making governance simpler and more effective, highlighting [effective governance resources](#) published in September.

Finance

School resource management

[Guidance](#), support and a policy document for schools and trusts to maximise value from resources, ensuring every pound delivers for children.

Declining pupil numbers impacting schools

According to a recent [blog by National Foundation for Education Research](#) (who analyse impact of falling pupil number on school finances), it anticipates that almost three quarters of primary schools will be feeling a detrimental impact on their in-year budget in 2025/26.

The decline in primary numbers is being felt across all regions in England and for the majority of governing boards this will be a topic of conversations at meetings.

Strategic workforce planning for schools and trusts

The [Strategic workforce planning for schools and trusts](#) brings together tools and guidance to help schools and trusts plan and deploy their workforce effectively to maximise value for pupils.

Maximising school and trust resources: managing financial and physical assets

[Information](#) about the range of support available to schools and trusts to maintain, improve and use their financial and physical assets effectively.

Maximising value for pupils

DfE has launched [Maximising value for pupils](#), which sets out how government will work with schools and trusts to maximise value from resources, ensuring every pound delivers the best outcomes for pupils.

[Updated tools and guidance are now](#) available with further resources and initiatives to follow as the programme evolves.

Improve your school's and trust's digital and financial planning

[Information](#) about the range of support available to schools and trusts to build capability, improve commercial expertise and meet digital standards.

School Teachers' Review Body reports

The Education Secretary's evidence to the [School Teacher Review body \(STRB\)'s reports](#) has been added ['Evidence to the STRB: 2026 pay award for teachers and leaders'](#) to the collection.

Setting executive salaries: guidance for academy trusts

[Guidance](#) to support academy trusts setting levels of pay for executive leaders.

Further education corporations and sixth-form college corporations: governance guide

[FE corporations and sixth-form college corporations governance guide](#) has been updated to reflect that the allowable increase in total remuneration and performance-related pay without requiring new HMT approval has changed from 2% to 5%.

Free breakfast clubs grant 2025 to 2026 academic year

[Guidance](#) for schools and local authorities on funding for the free breakfast clubs programme rolled out from April 2026.

Survey of school business professionals 2025

This [survey](#) asked questions about respondents' skills and experience, role in strategic planning and financial management, as well as exploring other aspects of procurement, income generation and use of integrated curriculum and financial planning (ICFP). It will be of interest to all involved with resource management within schools and trusts as well as other stakeholder groups and representative bodies.

Government autumn budget – Special Educational and Disability Budget

The government announced in the [Autumn Budget](#) that it will take over from local authorities in fully funding the cost of SEND provision from 2028-29. Further detail on how this impacts the projected DfE budget remains unclear.

Also revealed was the end of the two-child limit on benefits which will be lifted from April 2026 and is expected to reduce the number of children living in poverty by 450,000.

OFSTED

Ofsted's New Education Inspection Framework

A major shift in how schools are inspected in England is now underway. From 10 November 2025, Ofsted's new Education Inspection Framework (EIF) replaces the old single-word grades with a more detailed "report-card" system, offering governors and trustees clearer insight into school performance.

Below are resources that will help governors/trustees understand the new framework:

- [DfE EIF](#)
- The inspection toolkits, operating guides and inspection information pages for each education remit are available here:
 - [maintained schools and academies](#)
 - [registered early years provision](#)
 - [non-association independent schools](#)
 - [further education and skills](#)
- NGA LL module: [Ofsted and the education inspection framework 2025](#)
- NGAs Ofsted's new Approach to Inspections [webinar with Sir Martyn Oliver, HMI](#)
- [Ofsted Academy](#), find Ofsted's training, learning and professional development publications and videos
- [Ofsted safeguarding policy](#) and guidance for inspectors on handling safeguarding disclosures
- [Ofsted's code of conduct: collaborative inspection and regulation](#)
- [Ofsted inspections and visits: deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence](#)
- [Protected characteristics and separation by sex on school inspections](#), guidance for inspectors on inspecting separation by sex in schools and the teaching of protected characteristics and relationships and sex education

- [Equality duties on education inspection guidance](#)
- [Understanding Ofsted report cards and grades](#)
- [Ofsted Parent View: guidance for schools](#), this guidance explains Ofsted Parent View. Schools can use it to encourage parents and carers to share their experiences of their child's school
- [EIF: engagement programme](#), recordings of Ofsted's programme of webinars to help familiarise providers with the November 2025 education inspection framework changes
- [Principles for carrying out early years inspection and regulatory work without notice](#), guidance for inspectors on how to decide when to inspect or visit without notice
- [Principles for deciding when more than one inspector is needed for early years inspection and regulatory activity](#), guidance for inspectors on how to make this decision and the process to follow.

Inspection of multi academy trusts confirmed

The government has [confirmed plans](#) to introduce multi academy trust (MAT) inspections as early as 2027, with the necessary legal changes introduced as an amendment to the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill.

IDSR: news and updates

[News and information](#) about the IDSR, including any new functionality, features, bug fixes and updates.

The [IDSR guide](#) provides an overview of the IDSR report for primary and secondary schools, including schools with a sixth form, and gives guidance on how to interpret the data.

Safeguarding

New national Child Protection Authority announced

The government has announced plans for a new [Child Protection Authority \(CPA\)](#), a national body to improve child protection, as part of government strategy to protect children from predators and abuse.

They are also running a [consultation on establishing a CPA](#). The consultation is open to education professionals, safeguarding partners, voluntary and community organisations, local authorities, inspectorates, families and those with an interest in child protection. The consultation closes on 5 March 2026. Feedback will help shape the future of child protection in England

Safer Internet Day, 10 February 2026

Safer Internet Day 2026 will take place on the 10 of February 2026, with celebrations and learning based around the theme '**Smart tech, safe choices – Exploring the safe and responsible use of AI**'.

Safer Internet Day is co-ordinated in the UK by the [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) in partnership with [Childnet](#).

Westmorland and Furness have organised a Lunch & Learn session in support of Safer Internet Day. The session will focus on current online risks for children and young people and outline practical steps that adults can take to support safer digital use. If you work with or support children, booking a place may be helpful.

Monday 9 February 12:00pm - 13:00pm Microsoft Teams

To sign up, please email: wfscptraining@cumbria.gov.uk with your full name, job title, organisation & email address.

Children's online safety: managing habits and preventing risk

The Children's Commissioner has published a new guide for parents and carers, developed with children and young people: [What I wish my parents or carers knew: A guide for parents on managing children's digital lives.](#)

Supporting children's safety online is a shared responsibility for parents, professionals, politicians and wider society. For parents and carers, this responsibility has become increasingly complex as children's lives are now deeply intertwined with the digital world. Many parents face difficult decisions about how to balance protecting children from online harm with enabling access to spaces that are now central to learning, socialising and play.

New guidance on restrictive interventions in schools

New DfE [guidance](#) on the use of [restrictive interventions in schools](#), including use of reasonable force, will take effect from April 2026. The guidance includes clearer expectations on reporting and the use of force, additional clarification to help school staff use reasonable force safely and appropriately, advice on the use of seclusion, and specific support for staff working with pupils with SEND.

The DfE says the changes are designed to help schools reduce reliance on restrictive practices and ensure staff feel confident, safe and lawful when exercising their powers in limited situations.

Preventing Violence against women and girls in schools and trusts

The next generation of girls will be better protected from violence and young boys steered away from harmful misogynistic influences, under sweeping new measures [announced](#) by the Prime Minister.

This is just one part of the government's [strategy to tackle violence against women and girls](#), which includes that by 2029, every secondary school in England will have a credible offer for educating pupils about healthy and respectful relationships, to tackle violence against women and girls. To support this, the government will invest £3 million in teacher training and £5 million in pilot programmes.

Subject access requests: key issues for schools

Subject access requests (SAR) remain a significant challenge for schools and academy trusts, often linked to wider complaints and demanding considerable resources.

The new Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 (DUAA) gives schools clearer legal footing, allowing them to resist overly broad SARs, such as those where parents dictate extensive search terms or demand full document disclosure. It also requires schools to introduce a formal complaints process for data protection matters.

Lawyers, Veale Wasbrough Vizards, have produced an [article](#) highlighting five key areas: searches, safeguarding, data handling, deadlines and complaints management.

Barring unsuitable individuals from managing independent schools

This [guidance](#) is for:

- Proprietors, governing bodies, senior leaders, and school staff of independent schools, academies and free schools
- Individuals issued with a notice or a direction under section 128

The guidance outlines:

- The section 128 legislation that prohibits or restricts an individual managing an independent educational setting or governing a local-authority maintained school
- How to assess and consider if someone is unsuitable
- How to report someone as unsuitable to manage an independent school, academy or free school

A new document has been added: [Apply to revoke or vary a Section 128 barring direction](#) and the guidance has been updated to reflect the addition of this new document.

Every Life Matters

Every Life Matters is offering **free suicide prevention and mental health training across Cumbria**, designed for professionals, community groups, and anyone supporting others. Delivered by expert trainers from Cumbria, these sessions are tailored to boost confidence, reduce stigma, and equip individuals to spot and respond to suicidal thoughts or self-harm.

Available training includes:

- **Suicide awareness & alertness** (e.g., one-hour bite size sessions and Orange Button interactive training)
- **Safety planning** to help support individuals at risk
- **Self harm alertness and prevention**
- **Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)** (face-to-face and online)
- **Support for parents, carers, and those affected by suicide bereavement**

All courses are free for those living or working in Cumbria, though some advanced workshops like Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training and Youth MHFA may carry a fee.

Book your session via Eventbrite: [Every Life Matters – Cumbria Training Events](#).

SEND

Government launches national conversation on SEND

The government has [announced](#) a national conversation on SEND with commitment to put parents' experiences at the heart of SEND reform through a new public engagement campaign.

In the press release reference is made to the Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in schools (PINS) programme. Interim findings from evaluation of the PINS programme is also [available](#).

It comes on top of measures the government has already announced:

- [Access to early SEND support through Best Start Family Hubs](#)
- [£3bn investment to end postcode lottery for children with SEND](#)

Governance Reminders – Spring Term

Public Sector Equality Duty

[The Equality Act 2010](#) applies to all schools and trusts as the responsible body. In maintained schools, responsibility lies with the governing body, in academy trusts, the trust board is the responsible body.

The responsible body needs to review information demonstrating compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty annually and publish equality objectives at least every four years. Chapter five of the [Equality Act: advice for schools guidance](#) provides useful suggestions about how schools can publish this information.

Further information:

- Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) guidance on [unconscious bias](#)
- Section 1 of [maintained schools governance guide](#)
- Section 7 of [academy trust governance guide](#)
- Equality and Human Rights Commission [technical guidance for schools](#).

Careers Provision (Secondary Schools)

The [DfE statutory careers guidance](#) sets out requirements for secondary schools. Schools must:

- Develop a careers programme which meets the Gatsby Benchmarks (the recognised framework for high-quality careers guidance) and appoint a Careers Leader to lead the programme.
- Publish details of their careers programme on the school website (available for teachers, employer audiences, students, parents and carers).
- Provide at least six encounters with approved apprenticeships or technical education providers for all students, complying with the duration, frequency and content set out in guidance.
- Publish a policy statement on the school website setting out [arrangements for provider access](#) and make sure that the policy is followed.

School Financial Value Standard

The School Financial Value Standard ([SFVS](#)) explains the financial health and resource management standards schools need to confirm they have met and needs to be completed and submitted by **31st March 2026**.

The SFVS requires schools to benchmark their income and expenditure against other similar schools and take appropriate action. In order to facilitate this, the [Home - Financial Benchmarking and Insights Tool - GOV.UK](#) has now been updated with 2024/25 financial year data.

Academies; School resource management self-assessment checklist

This [self-assessment checklist](#) helps academy trusts check they are managing resources effectively and identify any adjustments they need to make and must be completed and submitted to the DfE annually.

Explore National Governance Association Learning Link Modules this Spring

Stepping into another new term, and building on last terms suggested learning, below is a selection of NGA LL 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:

- [NGA LL Equality, diversity and inclusion \(EDI\)](#)
- [NGA LL Effective financial governance in schools and trusts](#)
- [NGA LL Using integrated curriculum and financial planning](#)
- [NGA LL Stakeholder engagement: the governance role.](#)

Development and Training

Westmorland and Furness Training Offer:

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:

[11 February 2026, 5pm to 6.30pm](#)

[19 May 2026, 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, 6pm to 7.30pm](#)

[2 June 2026, 5pm to 6.30pm](#)

Introduction to the role of governance professional/clerk

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:

[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:

[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:

[26 February 2026, 5pm to 6.30pm](#)

Clerking/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:

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 and event links 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 and links:

4 March 2026, 6pm to 7pm

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 336 948 389 264 0

Passcode: jB7iy2F3

9 June 2026, 6pm to 7pm

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 378 160 903 595 0

Passcode: g8zR6bn7

New NGA Learning Link module: Taking the chair

Chairing a school or academy trust can be an exciting and hugely rewarding but it may feel a little overwhelming at first. [Taking the Chair](#) is a collection of expert insights into chairing designed to help both those who are new to chairing as well as those with more experience looking to build their leadership expertise. Whatever your circumstances, the module will help you understand your responsibilities and how to lead your board in the best way.

[Westmorland and Furness's Governance succession planning](#) and NGAs [Succession planning for the chair](#) – learn how to make succession planning for the chairing role part of the board's long-term practice, especially useful for new chairs to introduce if there is no current succession planning in place for your board.

NGA webinars available:

- [The curriculum and assessment review explained](#), explores the key findings and recommendations from the recent Curriculum and Assessment Review
- [Making flexible working work in education](#) explores how flexible working can be implemented successfully across all roles in schools and trusts
- [Growing your multi academy trust](#) discusses how boards can shape effective growth strategies that align with trust values and enhance outcomes for pupils.

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) is an independent body in England and Wales that advises LAs on the provision of religious education and collective worship.

Attached as a separate document, is the latest SACRE Newsletter for your interest and information.

[Westmorland and Furness SACRE](#) have a website and are offering some training specifically for governors and headteachers:

23rd April 2026: Cumbrian SACRE updates for school governors, 6-8pm. [Information and booking here.](#)

School to school support

Further to our article 'School to School Support' previously, the GST wish to remind any governors/trustees 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.

We would like to extend this invite to include clerks (governance professionals).

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

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- jane.lees@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk
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