



# GST Newsletter

Issue 20, June 2026

## Introduction

As we are heading towards to the end of another academic year, and the final edition of this academic years newsletter, the Governor Support Team (GST) would like to extend our sincere thanks to all governors, trustees, local academy members, associate members, clerks, and governance professionals for your ongoing dedication and support in educating children and young people across Westmorland and Furness. The year has passed remarkably quickly, and we hope that when the time comes, governors are able to enjoy a well-deserved summer break.

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

## News/Updates/ Information

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

### Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act

This government has passed its landmark [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act](#), which embeds key education priorities into law. The Act covers several areas across education and social care, focused on:

- Tackling barriers to education
- Increasing alignment in the school system
- Strengthening collaboration between schools and partner agencies
- Improving child safety and wellbeing measures
- Supporting care leavers.

The National Governance Association (NGA) have produced a [blog](#) which provides more details.



## Staffing Update – Governance Support

We would like to inform schools and governing boards of an upcoming staffing change within the Learning Improvement Service governance team.

Our Governor Support Assistant will be retiring on 3 June 2026, following nearly 15 years. Jane would like to take this opportunity to thank all governors/trustees and clerks/governance professionals for their continued commitment and support in helping to secure the best possible outcomes for children and young people across Westmorland and Furness. She also extends her warmest wishes to all governors/trustees and clerks/governance professionals for the future.

Arrangements for future governance support will be confirmed and communicated in due course.

**In the interim period**, should you have any governance related queries or require support, please direct these through your school's Link General Adviser in the first instance.

Further updates will be shared as soon as new arrangements are in place.

## The government has said it will introduce a legal ban on smartphones in schools in England

Education minister Baroness Jacqui Smith told the House of Lords, that the government would table an amendment to its landmark Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill "creating a clear legal requirement for schools" on the matter.

The DfE said the move would give "legal force to what schools are already doing in practice".

Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson had written to schools earlier this year encouraging them to follow [new guidance](#), that schools be phone-free for the entire day.

The government has said it will put that guidance on a statutory footing, which means schools must pay attention to it.

## Managing the school estate

From Autumn 2026, boards must demonstrate clearer strategic leadership, improved assurance, and long term financial planning rooted in lifecycle and condition data, not reactive repairs.

All responsible bodies will be required to submit a yearly School Estate Management Standards (SEMS) return showing their maturity across compliance, risk, maintenance, data, sustainability and strategy (Levels 1–4).

National expectations for estates governance have strengthened significantly. [The Education Estates Strategy \(2026\)](#) and [School Estate Management Standards](#) shift estates oversight from operational monitoring to a core governance responsibility.

## 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

## Free breakfast clubs: guidance for schools and trusts

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

## Free school meals: guidance for schools and local authorities

[Guidance for schools and local authorities about providing school](#) meals including information on free school meal eligibility.

The [free school meals expansion](#) grant provides extra funding to mainstream schools, special schools and alternative provision schools. This is to help with the additional costs of free meals following the expansion to free school meals eligibility in England to all children in households receiving Universal Credit.

The free school meals expansion grant will provide funding for the period from September 2026 to March 2027.

## School age childcare guidance for schools

**Guidance** for schools and academy trusts on how to set up and deliver school-age childcare provision and their role in supporting families to access provision during term times and holidays.

## School age childcare guidance for school and local authorities

**Guidance** for schools and local authorities responsible for securing sufficient childcare for school aged children has been updated, to offer advice to schools and academy trusts on maintaining wraparound school age childcare following the conclusion of the National Wraparound Childcare Programme on 31 March 2026.

## National Year of Reading 2026

The **“Go All In”** campaign is the UK’s National Year of Reading 2026, encouraging everyone to reconnect with reading through their passions and everyday life.

Visit the events calendar to see what is available in your area or even submit an event for inclusion.

## Edtech and Artificial Intelligence (AI) companies invited to help build safe AI tutoring tools for disadvantaged pupils

As part of the governments **Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges**, they are inviting EdTech companies and AI labs to bid to develop safe, personalised **AI tutoring tools** designed to improve learning outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.

## Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges

Find **resources** to help you develop a whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing.

## Research suggests improvements in teacher wellbeing

The DfE has published findings from the fourth wave of the **working lives of teachers and leaders** 2025 survey.

## NGAs – Governing in 4D

At the Multi Academy Trust (MAT) Conference, NGA published their latest **policy paper on trust governance, Governing in 4D**.

It establishes a new framework for understanding governance, focusing on the four dimensions of members, trustees, the local tier and executives. Effective trust governance requires each of these interdependent dimensions to perform their unique role as part of a coherent governance structure.

Many trusts already have successful governance, and this paper defines the non-negotiable features which are visible in every effective model. It calls on the government to ensure every trust’s governance includes these key features, so no pupil or community is left behind.

## Primary - Getting children ready for reception: supporting effective transition

New government guidance and practical advice **launched** on primary school offer day to help families get children ready for school, backed by language support.

**Guidance** for schools and early years settings, including childminders, of how they can work with parents and carers to support children’s transition into reception.

The DfE also offers a range of **online and in person school support and professional development resources** for improving teaching and leadership of reception.

## Secondary - Exam support to remain

Following a recent **consultation**, exam boards will continue to publish formula and equation sheets in advance of GCSE mathematics, physics and combined science exams, with copies also provided within exam papers.

## £1bn boost to Physical Education (PE) and school sport to end fitness postcode lottery

The DfE have [announced](#) funding to support new PE and school sport, with targeted support to ensure all children can access equal opportunities for activity.

The existing PE and Sport Premium will be replaced by a new PE and School Sport Partnerships Network. Launching in spring 2027, it aims to provide more tailored support for schools which may include access to specialist sports coaches, top-up swimming lessons and expanded extra-curricular sporting opportunities.

As part of wider measures, schools will receive around £200 million to improve sporting facilities, which could be used for enhancing accessibility and providing additional equipment. A £100 million PE Premium payment will also be made available to support primary schools during the transition year.

## Safeguarding

### Government to examine deaths of vulnerable care leavers

The government has [launched](#) a review into deaths of young people leaving the care system to be published later this year, led by Ashley John-Baptiste and Clare Chamberlain.

The review will focus on young people's experiences, who and what mattered to them, and identify what more could have been done to support them.

### Regional CONTEST co-ordinators

The DfEs [regional CONTEST co-ordinators](#) support the delivery of the department's contribution to the UK counter terrorism strategy and can help education providers with the Prevent Duty.

The aim of CONTEST is to reduce the risk from terrorism to the UK, its citizens and interests overseas, so people can live freely and with confidence.

### Child Safety Week - Child Accident Prevention Trust

Child Safety Week 2026 runs from Monday 1 June to Sunday 7 June. Organised by the Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT), this year's theme is 'Making Prevention Possible' building practical capacity for safety behaviour in families and the professionals who work with them.

CAPT have free [downloadable resources](#) including fact sheets, activity sheets, session plans and display materials for schools.

### The DfE Cyber Security Hub

The DfE has launched a new [Cyber Security Hub for schools](#), offering practical guidance on improving IT security, a template for creating a cyber support plan, and specific advice for schools responding to an active cyber incident.

The DfE has acknowledged that education is disproportionately targeted by cyber attacks compared to other sectors, while also being considered to have relatively weak defences. Fewer than half of schools have a password policy, fewer than one in six has a designated cyber security lead, and less than 40 per cent has a cyber incident response plan.

For Designated Safeguarding Leads, there is a safeguarding dimension worth considering. Cyber incidents can disrupt access to case management systems, expose sensitive child protection records, and compromise the confidentiality of children already at risk. It is worth asking whether your school's incident response plan has any provision for safeguarding specific continuity.

## UK Safer Internet Centre (UKSIC), NEW Guidance about publishing photographs of children online

Schools rightly want to celebrate the achievements of their pupils, and photographs are a natural part of that. New [guidance from the UKSIC](#) sets out why that instinct now needs to be balanced carefully against an emerging safeguarding risk.

Incidents of this kind are not yet widespread, but the working group behind the guidance is clear that it is only a matter of time before more schools are targeted.

### Get ready for allergy safety changes in schools

The DfE is due to publish updates to statutory guidance on supporting pupils with medical conditions at school.

The changes were proposed during a recent government consultation and are expected to include new measures to ensure pupils with allergies are championed and protected.

In the meantime, the NGA have a planned webinar that will support boards in understanding the new expectations to safeguard pupils with allergies, you can [book your place](#) here.

School staff may also be interested in attending an [online Q&A](#) with the DfE, hosted by The Allergy Team.

## OFSTED

### School inspection data summary report (IDSR) guide

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

NGA have two webinars that may of interest in relation to understanding data:

- [Using data with confidence: monitoring educational performance in primary schools](#)
- [Using data with confidence: monitoring educational performance in secondary schools.](#)

## Reminders

### The Great Big Green Week 6 to 14 June 2026

Every June, thousands of events take place in towns, cities, villages and schools across the country, from repair cafés and nature walks to community clean-ups and film screenings.

The Big Green Week has free resource packs available for primary and secondary schools, linked to the national curriculum, and packed with activities for all ages.

[Read more and download the free resources.](#)

## Climate Action

The DfE expectation was that all schools would have a sustainability lead and a Climate Action Plan in place by December 2025. [Resources and support](#) are available to help schools on their journey.

### Questions for the board:

- Has the school formally identified a sustainability lead?
- Does the school have a published or draft climate action plan?
- How does the governing board monitor progress against sustainability commitments?
- What barriers has leadership identified, and what mitigation is in place?
- How is sustainability embedded into strategic planning, rather than treated as a standalone initiative?

## Development/Training

### 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:

**Date: 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

These sessions, led by Isobel Booter, Assistant Director of Education and Inclusion, 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:

**Date: 9 June 2026, 6pm to 7pm**

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 378 160 903 595 0

Passcode: g8zR6bn7.

### National Governance Association Learning Link eLearning (NGA LL)

Westmorland and Furness Council are continuing to fund free access to the NGA LL eLearning platform for the 2026 – 2027 financial year.

Please do take advantage of this fantastic resource to help build and enhance your boards existing skills and knowledge. You will need to register to access the platform, if you have not yet registered, instructions of how to do this and a guide to the platform can be found [here](#).

Sometimes, the biggest challenge can be where to start! NGA LL have provided a suggested pathway covering a governance year, that may help with your development journey. They have separate pathways for the following roles:

- [Maintained school governors](#)
- [Multi Academy Trust Trustees](#)
- [Local academy committee/Local governing board members.](#)