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1. Information: accounts return update

We're aware that some academy trusts are experiencing issues with the accounts return process. We apologise for any inconvenience that this may be causing.

We have resolved a number of the issues identified and are working urgently to resolve the remainder.

We are also preparing further user guidance about known issues. We'll publish this on the [academies accounts return](#) page on GOV.UK where we'll also provide further updates and information to support

trusts preparing their accounts return.

If you have a query about submitting your accounts return, please email academy.questions@education.gov.uk using the subject title "AR – technical issues" and we'll respond as a matter of urgency.

2. Information: update to the estimating your academy funding allocation guide

We've updated the estimating your academy funding allocation guide for the 2016 to 2017 academic year. The guide explains to prospective new academy openers how we'll calculate their revenue funding, known as the general annual grant (GAG). The guide contains links to online data and includes examples for each element of the GAG.

3. Information: publication of school improvement monitoring and brokering grant provisional allocations

We've published provisional allocations for the new school improvement monitoring and brokering grant. This grant will allow local authorities to continue to monitor and broker school improvement for low-performing maintained schools. The first £30 million will be allocated in September 2017.

These are illustrative allocations only, and can be used to help local authorities undertake their business planning. We'll confirm final allocations in September 2017.

4. Reminder: transferring learning difficulty assessments (LDAs) to education health care plans (EHCPs)

Sections 4 and 7 of the high needs funding: operational guide 2016 to 2017 have been updated with important information for local authorities and institutions regarding how the transfer from learning difficulty assessments (LDAs) to education health care plans (EHCPs) should be managed within the high needs funding system.

We would like to remind local authorities to provide clear, written communication to institutions before 20 January 2017 regarding those students who have yet to complete the LDA transfer process. This will confirm whether or not they expect these students to receive an EHCP before the end of the academic year. This will enable institutions to ensure that the 2016 to 2017 RO6 ILR data return due by 6 February 2017 is as accurate as it can be for lagged funding purposes.

5. Information: Condition Data Collection programme

Surveyors contracted by EFA are set to begin visiting schools in February as part of Condition Data Collection (CDC) programme.

The CDC is the successor to the Property Data Survey (PDS) programme, which ran between 2012 and 2014. The programme will visit every school in England over the next three years to collect building condition data, information about building management and compliance documentation, and other contextual information.

This information will be used by DfE and EFA to help inform future condition funding allocations, and will also help us to understand more fully, the nature, use and management of the education estate.

Schools will be contacted at least 35 days prior to their planned visit date by their surveying organisation and will be asked to complete an online CDC school questionnaire before the surveyors' visit.

6. Action: spring 2017 school census

The spring school census opens on 19 January 2017. We sent a 'readiness bulletin' to all academies last week. Please complete a service request form if you did not receive this bulletin.

The deadline for approved submissions is 15 February 2017 and the database will close to academies and local authorities on 15 March 2017.

We've updated the school census 2016 to 2017 guide. The update includes clarification on the collection of personal data from parents/guardians or pupils and, in particular, the collection of ethnicity, nationality, country of birth and proficiency in English.

DfE has written to all headteachers to highlight the updated guidance and request their support locally with improving the collection of sensitive data about pupils in the school census.

We've set up a data collection forum for use by data collection colleagues in academies and local authorities. To access this forum, you will need a username and password specific to the forum. If you would like to request access, or if you have any questions about the school census, please complete a service request form.

7. Information: buying new computer equipment

If you're thinking of buying new tablets, laptops or desktop devices, we encourage you to take advantage of a new deal developed by the Department for Education (DfE) and Crown Commercial Services (CCS).

The deal will bring together schools' requirements and potentially save thousands of pounds.

You can read more about the new deal to help schools save cash on computer equipment on GOV.UK.

To qualify, you must submit your requirements by 10 February 2017. Orders will be placed by schools after procurement is complete on 28 March 2017.

8. Reminder: school workforce census deadline

There's still time to run final checks and submit your 2016 school workforce census return. Please make sure you complete the following 3 actions by 20 January 2017.

- submit and approve your return - if you've already loaded and validated your return, please check that you have also submitted and approved it. We won't receive your return until you've done this
- add missing contracts - run the missing contract report in your return to make sure all staff records have the essential contract attached. Staff whose records aren't attached to the contract will be incorrectly regarded as not employed by you

- check notepad entries for queries - make sure that any return that has a query is accompanied by an acceptable notepad entry. Otherwise, the return will remain unauthorised

You can find the notepad entries you need to use for queries in the guidance on acceptable notepad entries to use for COLLECT queries.

If you have any questions about your return, read our guidance on submitting data for the school workforce census.

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