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### Correspondence

# Academy trusts: school governance update January 2020

Updated 16 January 2020

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## 1. New year message from Lord Agnew

I am delighted to be returning as the minister for the school system.

Firstly, I am pleased to see that a number of governors in the education sector were recognised in the Queen's New Year's Honours List. This is a reminder of the vital role you play in your own schools, and how effective governance can help ensure that all children have access to a world-class education.

With the start of every new year comes a time for self-reflection and longer-term planning. I invite you to explore our development programmes to sharpen your governance skills and to build your networks. You can refresh your knowledge of statutory duties through our [statutory policies for schools and academy trusts guidance](#), or remind yourself of the core guidance in the [governance handbook](#).

This year, my priority is that we continue to improve the support, training and guidance available to governors and clerks.

I am particularly excited about a new tool that will help you with better financial

want to be heard?

7. Action: funded training and development programmes available now
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reporting, more information will be available when it is launched in the next few months.

This is the third edition of the new governance update, and I hope you are finding it useful. Having listened to feedback, it will be published approximately twice per term. Your ongoing feedback is extremely important so please get in touch if you have any suggestions for improvements by emailing [schoolgovernance.update@education.gov.uk](mailto:schoolgovernance.update@education.gov.uk)

Finally, I would like to say how much I appreciate the time and dedication you put into governing our schools. Together we can make a positive impact on the education and lives of young people everywhere. I wish you all the best for 2020.



## 2. Action: consultation on the removal of the outstanding exemption

The DfE announced last autumn proposals to lift the exemption from routine inspection for outstanding schools. This will help to give parents a clearer picture of the standard of schools in their area and support these schools to continue improving. The consultation on lifting the exemption on outstanding school inspections is now live and we are keen to hear from those on governing and trust boards. You can [take part in the consultation](#).

### **3. Information: NFER and DfE survey of governance sector, deadline for responding extended**

The department is working with NFER (National Foundation for Educational Research) to conduct an important survey of those involved in school governance in England. The survey went live in November and the deadline for responding has been extended to 24 January. Around 5,000 schools have been sampled to take part. If your school has been contacted by NFER we urge you to participate. These results will help to inform the Department's evidence base and influence future policy development on school governance.

### **4. Action: add your member and trustee email addresses to the 'Get Information About Schools' (GIAS) database**

The [Academies Financial Handbook](#) (September 2019) sets out a new requirement for all academy trusts to provide a direct email address for all their members and trustees in the governance section of the GIAS database. This is in addition to providing email addresses for the chair of trustees, accounting officer and chief financial officer. To update contact details on GIAS, get in touch with your academy trust's GIAS approver, who will be able to make the changes using their [DfE sign-in account](#). Find further information in our guidance ['Academy trusts: provide or update governance contact information'](#).

### **5. Information: are you aware of the clerking competency framework?**

The [clerking competency framework](#) demonstrates the importance of professional clerking and the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to deliver it, and provides some helpful guidance on how clerks may be used. We would suggest that all clerks and governing board members, especially chairs, familiarise themselves with the framework in order to understand the clerking role more fully.

### **6. Action: calling clerks/governance professionals - do you want to be**

## heard?

The DfE governance policy team is looking to speak to clerks/governance professionals to develop their policy work. If you would like to register your interest to be involved, please send an email using the subject title: 'Clerking Future Policy Work' to [capacityandpractice.governance@education.gov.uk](mailto:capacityandpractice.governance@education.gov.uk).

## 7. Action: funded training and development programmes available now

The department has contracted 7 organisations to continue to provide professional development programmes until March 2021.

The governance leadership programmes are ideal for those in roles such as chair, vice chair or committee chair and will support you to work with your board to increase its effectiveness.

The governance clerking programmes are suitable for all school, academy or trust board clerks and aims to increase clerking expertise.

For further details on these two programmes go to our guidance on '[Academy and school governance: professional development](#)'.

The free integrated curriculum financial planning training is suitable for all school leaders, including governors, to help schools plan the best curriculum for your pupils within your budget. To find out more visit the [ISBL website](#) or email [training@isbl.org.uk](mailto:training@isbl.org.uk).

## 8. Action: compare how much your school is spending on agency supply teachers

Schools using our [supply teachers and agency workers deal](#) are achieving substantial savings. Using this deal your school can avoid costly temp-to-perm fees, as agencies cannot apply fees for making temporary staff permanent after 12 weeks of working for you (must give 4 weeks' notice).

You can use the department's [financial benchmarking service](#) to help you compare how much your school is spending on agency supply staff compared with similar schools.

## Brexit

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[Find out more about Brexit](#)

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