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Department
for Education

Correspondence
Academy trusts: school governance update September 2019

Published 18 September 2019

1. A message from Lord Agnew, Minister for the Schools System

I am delighted to be writing to you as part of the launch of the "School governance update". This new monthly message is designed to support those involved in the vital work of governing our schools by providing you with key updates from the Department for Education (DfE).

To my mind there is nothing more important to the proper running of schools than governance. Without effective governance, sustained high performance is near impossible. I am incredibly grateful for the time and energy that you give to this vital public service, and the dedication shown by all governors and trustees to provide strong, effective governance in our schools.

Through these monthly updates we will be able to highlight information you need to know for your role, as well as relevant information from the wider department that you will want to be aware of. As a former chair, I am very aware of both the challenges and satisfaction that being involved in governance can bring, including the amount of time it can take to find the information you need. I hope that these communications will help to reduce your workload by putting all the key news in one place for you.

I am also happy to announce the launch of some new and improved sources of governance guidance. You told us that departmental guidance needs to be more accessible, since it is often hard to find what you are looking for. In response to this, we have recently published a list of statutory polices for schools and two longer, more comprehensive, lists of all GOV.UK documents that relate to local-authority-maintained school governance and academy trust governance respectively. These longer lists ensure that all DfE documents relevant to school governance can now be found in one place. For all of the lists we have made clear where guidance applies to either maintained schools, academies or both, and categorised documents to help you find the information that you need. This is the beginning of an ongoing piece of work to make it as easy as possible for you to find the information you need.

I am very proud to work with a sector of dedicated volunteers who are so committed to delivering world class education for every young person. I assure all of you that my department is working hard to make it easier for you to govern effectively. We owe each of you a great debt of gratitude and so again, thank you for all that you are doing.

2. Making governance resources more accessible

On Tuesday 17 September 2019, the department launched 3 new GOV.UK pages, in response to feedback from governors, trustees chairs and clerks. The pages are designed to help those working in school governance to more easily navigate our governance content online.

We have created:

- a [collection of all gov.uk guidance relevant to maintained school governance](#)
- a [collection of all gov.uk guidance relevant to academy trust governance](#)

These two collections are designed to make it easier to find what you need online. Within these collections are links to two further pages:

We have also updated the existing [Statutory policies for schools](#) resource to create a new, more accessible, web page. This page contains a list of statutory policies for schools, which sets out legal or otherwise mandatory guidance for schools.

Further promotional material is available:

- to help recruit governors/trustees
- to help governors/trustees apply for professional development

3. Recent funding announcements

On the 30 August, the Prime Minister announced a further £14bn investment to provide additional funding for schools for the next three years. It ensures that funding for all schools can rise in line with inflation next year and levels up funding across the country. It includes an additional £700 million for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

The government has also announced an additional £400 million [investment for 16 to 19 year olds' education](#) for the next financial year. Also announced were a package of measures that will ensure [standards in schools](#) continue to rise, that will [reform teachers' pay](#) to attract and retain the best people in the profession and will tackle poor behaviour.

Read [further information about this investment](#).

4. Academies Financial Handbook 2019

The 2019 edition of the [Academies Financial Handbook](#) came into effect on 1 September 2019.

We've included a summary of [what has changed in this edition](#). This include new requirements for academy trusts, from 1 September 2019, to:

- maintain a risk register
- submit an annual internal scrutiny report to ESFA
- provide a direct email address for all members and trustees using the governance section of Get information about schools (GIAS)

We've updated our [guide to providing or updating academy trusts governance contact information](#) to help trusts provide email addresses for their members and trustees.

5. Understanding your data

The [Understanding your data](#) resource provides a basis for board discussions through the strategic use of data to ensure that value for money is achieved, whilst focusing on educational outcomes.

We have recently updated this resource and have:

- republished the resource in a more accessible version
- improved all sections, adding further clarity on messaging, and highlighting the importance of data relating to pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) included links to additional sources of information, including guidance on [setting executive salaries](#) and academy trust good practice guides on [internal scrutiny and management letters](#)

6. Support for governing boards to reduce workload

In the recent NGA survey, 62% of respondents reported that staff wellbeing and workload were one of the top five issues facing their school.

We have published [support for governing boards](#) in the workload reduction toolkit, using the principles from the [Making data work report](#). We welcome the fact that governing boards are supporting workload reduction in schools and hope these materials will help reduce workload for boards and across the school. Read [further information on action to support workload reduction](#).

Please let us know, by emailing workload.solutions@education.gov.uk if you would like to share examples of good practice, for example on how boards have streamlined the data they receive and monitor.

7. Keeping children safe in education

On 26 June 2019, the DfE published a revised version of the [Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) statutory guidance](#).

The changes are of a largely factual and technical nature and include, amongst other things, new paragraphs on serious violence, upskirting (now a criminal offence), and a link to the [departmental advice supporting schools to teach pupils](#)

[how to stay safe online](#). A full breakdown of the changes are included at Annex H of the guidance.

Schools and colleges are reminded to have regard to Part 5 of the guidance, which covers managing reports of child on child sexual violence and sexual harassment. This was introduced for the first time in September 2018. There is also detailed advice to support schools and colleges understand, [prevent and respond to reports of child on child sexual violence and sexual harassment](#).

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Working, jobs and pensions

Departments and policy

How government works

Departments

Worldwide

Services

Guidance and regulation

News and communications

Research and statistics

Policy papers and consultations

Transparency and freedom of information releases