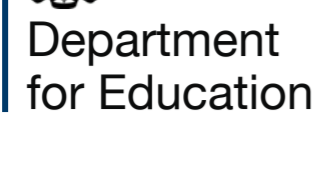


Part of Education and childcare during coronavirus



Correspondence Academy trusts: school governance update July 2020

Updated 17 July 2020

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Introduction

Welcome to the July edition of the governance update. In this update we have linked to the main guidance that we have published to support schools prepare for the autumn term, alongside other publications and news that may be of interest to you in your governance role. We would like to thank you for your ongoing commitment to school and trust governance, and for the support you have shown your school leaders this summer term and throughout the national response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. We wish you and your schools a restful summer break.

Guidance for getting all pupils back in the autumn term

We have published [Actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak](#) outlining our plans for the autumn term. The guidance includes details to help schools prepare for all children and young people to return to full-time education in the new academic year. It includes plans to:

- lift current restrictions on group sizes to allow schools, colleges and nurseries to fully reopen to all children and young people as coronavirus (COVID-19) infection rates continue to fall
- keep children in class or year group sized bubbles and encourage older children and staff to keep their distance from each other where possible
- encourage testing if staff, pupils or their families develop coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms and provide access to easy to use home testing kits for children and staff who would otherwise be unable to get a test
- increase the frequency of cleaning and minimise contact in corridors
- take action in circumstances in which there is a positive case in a school or college
- cover assessment and accountability regarding Ofsted and exams in 2021

We have also published [guidance for parents](#) about what to expect.

We have published separate guidance for [early years](#), [further education](#) and [specialist settings](#).

In June, we announced a £650 million catch-up premium for schools. Schools will receive additional funding for the 2020 to 2021 academic year to ensure they have the support they need to help all pupils make up for lost teaching time. We will publish more information and guidance on when schools can expect to receive the funding, how they should use it, and how governors and trustees should scrutinise use of the funding imminently.

We will publish more detail on some of the other areas outlined in the guidance in the coming weeks. Check [Guidance for schools: coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) regularly for updates.

Governors and trustees visiting schools

Our guidance does not prevent governors or trustees going into schools. When considering how to organise visits from governors or trustees, schools will need to consider their own risk assessments and how they will protect the health and safety of any visitors alongside staff and pupils, in line with our guidance. Our guidance explains that schools should consider how to manage visitors to the site and ensure site guidance on physical distancing and hygiene is explained to visitors on or before arrival.

If your visits can happen outside of school hours, they should. A record should be kept of all visitors. Depending on their risk assessment, schools may choose to continue to host governor meetings virtually.

Benefit from the reduced cost of risk cover

The [risk protection arrangement \(RPA\)](#) is an alternative to commercial insurance and has been operational for academies since 2014.

For just £18 per pupil, the insurance includes cover for:

- employer liability
- governor liability
- material damage
- professional indemnity
- personal accident

To join the RPA, use [DfE Sign-in](#). If you have any questions, including about how to opt in or opt out, email academies.RPA@education.gov.uk.

Finance update

Academies Financial Handbook 2020

The [2020 edition of the Academies Financial Handbook](#) comes into effect on 1 September 2020. The changes to the 2020 edition are summarised at the beginning of the handbook. We will update the digital handbook to reflect the 2020 edition on 1 September 2020.

Changes include new information and requirements for academy trusts from 1 September 2020, such as:

- trustees' responsibilities with regard to maintaining the trust as a going concern
- internal scrutiny coverage
- updated information on general controls and transparency

Declare or seek approval for your related party transactions

Academy trusts must use our [online form to declare transactions with related parties](#) before they are agreed with a supplier. If the transaction cost exceeds £20,000, either as a single contract or cumulative transactions with the same supplier, you must seek approval from us using the same online form. You must seek approval before the contract starts.

For more information about the reporting requirement, read [Checklist: prepare evidence needed to seek approval for a related party transaction](#).

DBS suitability checks for chairs of trust boards

We have developed a new digital service for chairs of academy trust boards to apply for suitability checks. A recent change in regulations allows us to offer an improved process for identity checks and modernised Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for new chairs using the online Verifile service.

All new academy trust chairs of trustees must complete a suitability check as soon as they are appointed. We will contact any chairs of trustees who have already started their DBS applications to explain what they need to do next. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) carries out suitability checks on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education to comply with legislation and to keep children safe in education.

For more information, read [Academy trust chair suitability checks](#).

New guidance on managing cyber security risks in your school

When considering a school's security policies and plans, schools should also include an assessment of cyber security risk. A cyber security incident can result in a data breach where sensitive personal information about pupils, parents and staff is accessed without permission. This can have implications for safeguarding, and can also result in serious disruption to the running of the school.

The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) has published [Cyber security in schools: questions for governors and trustees](#) to help inform conversations with school leaders about managing cyber security risks.

Provide or update governance contact information

Academy trusts, including free schools, university technical colleges and studio schools, must [notify ESFA](#) about the appointment or vacating of governance roles within their trust. This is a requirement in the [Academies Financial Handbook](#).

ESFA also sends confidential information about funding and financial reporting to academy trusts throughout the year, so it is important we have the right contact details for you.

Contact your academy trust's governance professional to add or update information in the governance section of [Get information about schools \(GIAS\)](#) using the trust's [DfE Sign-in account](#).

If you are a governance professional, or are otherwise unable to upload your details to GIAS, email schoolgovernance.update@education.gov.uk and we will add you to the circulation list manually.

Funded training and development programmes

Our funded development programmes are now available virtually and are suitable for home working.

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

The governance clerking programmes are suitable for all school, academy and trust board clerks or governance professionals. They aim to increase expertise in these important governance roles.

For further details on these programmes, read [Academy and school governance: professional development](#).

Further information

The National Governance Association (NGA) continues to update its [resources](#), which are currently free to use, to support governing and trust boards to manage the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) in schools. Additional NGA resources are also available to buy, including the recently updated [Welcome to a multi academy trust: a guide for newly appointed trustees](#) and [online appraisal tools](#) for evaluating boards' structures and practice and chairs' leadership.

The Confederation of School Trusts (CST) has updated its [decision-making framework for trust governance](#) in light of our autumn term planning guidance, and has made the document accessible to all. CST's framework outlines a series of strategic actions trust boards may wish to take when considering the full opening of schools in September and could be used as a board agenda.

Is this page useful? Yes No

Coronavirus (COVID-19) The UK has left the EU

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance and support](#) [Get ready for new rules in January 2021](#)

Services and information Departments and policy

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		Transparency and freedom of information releases