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# Correspondence

## School governance update: March 2021

Updated 1 March 2021

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Welcome to the March 2021 edition of the governance update.

### 1. Message from the Minister

The impact of the last 12 months has been enormous and has touched every corner of our lives. Those working and volunteering in the education system have been particularly affected by the pandemic.

I cannot overestimate the importance of having such dedicated volunteers and governance support in our schools and academies, supporting our school leaders and staff and rising to meet each new challenge. I wish to say a huge thank you, both personally and from the Department for Education, to all of you who have worked so tirelessly throughout the pandemic.

The importance of high quality and effective governance is at the heart of our education system, and your personal dedication to maintaining the support structure of governance at this time is not recognised enough.

I hope that as the year progresses, we will start to see some normality return. The first step being, as the Prime Minister announced on Monday 22 February, that the majority of pupils in primary and secondary schools and colleges will return to face-to-face teaching on Monday 8 March. In the meantime, I want each of you to know how much your hard work, and that of your colleagues, is and will continue to be appreciated by me and the department.

### 2. Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance pages for schools and colleges

These are links to the main guidance pages that cover a range of topic around pupils returning to schools and colleges from the 8 March. While these may cover operational running of schools and academies, it is important for those on governing and trust boards to be aware of in their role of supporting and challenging school leaders on their duties.

- [Guidance for schools: coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) - Our guidance about governors or trustees going into schools has not changed. This can still happen, if considered essential. This guidance covers how schools should consider managing visitors on the site.
- [Actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak](#)
- [Early years and childcare providers](#)
- [Special schools, special post-16 providers and alternative provision](#)
- [Teacher assessed grades for students](#) - press release
- [New education recovery package for children and young people](#) - press release
- [Evidence summary](#) – sets out the evidence relevant to, and in support of, the government's decision to lift restrictions on education from Monday 8 March

### 3. Nominate your board or governance professional for an Outstanding Governance Award

Boards, clerks and lead governance professionals can gain recognition for excellent practice and significant achievements in the National Governance Association's Outstanding Governance Awards, which are now open for entry.

6 categories are available:

- outstanding governance in a single school
- outstanding governance in a multi academy trust
- outstanding governance in a federation
- outstanding clerk to a governing board
- outstanding lead governance professional
- outstanding vision and strategy

Enter the awards to demonstrate the positive contribution that good governance makes to the school system and the education of children and young people. The deadline for entries is 9am on Monday 26 April, and it is open to all.

Visit the [awards page](#) for more information and for information on how to enter.

### 4. Updated school land guidance and forms

We have published updated school land guidance and application forms at [submit a school land transaction proposal](#).

The guidance explains how and when it is mandatory to involve the Secretary of State in land transactions, including the disposal and acquisition of school land and the change of use of school playing fields.

There is advice for different types of applicant (including governing bodies that hold land for a school) on how the rules apply to them depending on the type of land and transaction.

For each type of transaction, the guidance describes the assessment criteria and information required and there are new application forms.

### 5. For maintained schools: update on School Financial Value Standard (SFVS)

Local authority-maintained schools must submit the SFVS annually to their local authority. Local authorities use this information to inform their programme of financial assessment and audit.

Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, DfE has decided that the SFVS return should be delayed this year. This is to take account of the current pressures schools and local authorities are facing.

For the financial year 2020 to 2021, schools should submit their SFVS to their local authority no later than Friday 28 May.

Local authorities should submit their assurance statement to the DfE within 6 weeks, no later than Friday 9 July.

This has now been published at [Schools Financial Value standard \(SFVS\)](#).

### 6. Wellbeing for Education Return – new webinar and supporting resources for all education staff

Governors and trustees are responsible for ensuring the wellbeing of the staff and pupils in their academies and schools is being supported. New and updated [Wellbeing for Education Return resources](#) are now available for education staff to supplement the project's locally adapted training and support offers.

These include a short, recorded webinar [Every interaction matters](#). It introduces a simple framework for promoting wellbeing, resilience and mental health. It is intended for use by education leaders with all staff, INSET sessions, or for education staff to work through individually.

This sits alongside the [original Wellbeing for Education Return resources](#) covering issues such as bereavement, loss, anxiety, stress and trauma and signposting to free [Mental health resources for children, parents, carers and school and college staff](#).

### 7. NGA survey for clerks and governance professionals on careers and development

Clerks and other governance professionals serving schools and academy trusts are invited to complete a new national survey from the National Governance Association.

The aim of the survey is to understand clerks and governance professional's views and experiences of their career and development, and could help to inform future policy development. Questions cover entry into the profession, the training and qualifications available, and job satisfaction and progression.

Please forward this on to your board's clerk or other governance professional if they do not receive this update directly.

The survey closes at 9am on Thursday 1 April. [Take the survey](#).

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