



GST Newsletter

Issue 13, April 2025

Introduction

Welcome back, we hope you managed to have a lovely break.

It has been two years now since the establishment of [Westmorland and Furness Council](#), how quickly the time has flown! I just wanted to share thanks to all school staff who have carried on with the important day job of teaching our children and young people and a thank you to everyone involved in delivering governance, which contributes to ensuring the best outcomes for all our children and young people.

Renewal of NGA Learning Link eLearning (NGA LL)

Westmorland and Furness Council are pleased to announce that they will continue to fund free access to the NGA LL eLearning platform for the 2025 – 2026 financial year.

Please do take advantage of this fantastic resource to help build and enhance your boards existing skills and knowledge. You will need to register to access the platform, if you have not yet registered, instructions of how to do this and a guide to the platform can be found [here](#).

Sometimes, the biggest challenge can be where to start! NGA LL have provided a suggested pathway covering a governance year, that may help with your development journey. They have separate pathways for the following roles:

- [Maintained school governors](#)
- [Multi Academy Trust Trustees](#)
- [Local academy committee/Local governing board members](#)

If governors would like to refer back to any information in previous newsletters, please visit the Governor Support Team (GST) website.

Information

As well as the Department for Education (DfE) [School Governance](#) update, below are further items which may be of interest:

Health & Safety: The importance of recording incidents at work

1. It's important to record incidents, such as accidents or near misses at work to improve safety in the workplace. When an accident occurs, it's crucial to understand how and why it happened. Analysing these incidents means we can take proactive steps to make sure it doesn't happen again – not only keeping employees, pupils and visitors safe, but ensuring that the business of education can continue running smoothly.



2. Effective health and safety investigations will assist in identifying any deficiencies in risk control measures and the actions required to prevent future injuries, harm or losses. They will also help to inform any potential future claim investigations that might arise following an incident.
3. It's a legal responsibility. This goes without saying – but your legal responsibility is one of the most important reasons to record accidents at work.

Certain accidents also need to be reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under Reporting of injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences regulations (RIDDOR). These incidents must be submitted within a short timeframe, it's therefore important to record any kind of accidents immediately

You should ensure that you regularly monitor accidents and incidents and produce an annual health and safety report. Community and voluntary controlled schools should ensure that all incidents involving adults and all significant incidents to pupils (i.e. those requiring or being advised to seek further medical treatment above minor first aid) are being reported to the Council's Health and Safety Team.

The team will continue to review submitted accidents and report RIDDOR reportable incidents to the HSE on a school's behalf and will produce data reports for the Council's Schools Health and Safety Committee. If you require information in relation to accident/incident data for your school, please contact the Health and Safety mailbox to request this, HealthAndSafety.Mailbox.WAF@cumbria.gov.uk.

Managing asbestos in your school or college

DfE has updated the [Managing asbestos in your school or college](#) guidance for school leaders, governors, local authorities and academy trusts about managing asbestos in schools and colleges.

Establishing school-based nursery provision

[Non-statutory guidance](#) for schools, has been updated about prescribed alterations, reflecting the new regulations that amend the process schools need to follow, to add a nursery to their provision.

Supervised toothbrushing for children to prevent tooth decay

[National programme](#) rolled out for 3 to 5 year olds in early years settings - including nurseries and primary schools - in most deprived areas of England.

Regional improvement for standards and excellence (RISE)

The '[Regional improvement for standards and excellence](#)' has been updated with information about how RISE will operate and be funded, which schools are eligible for targeted intervention, and the universal service's national priorities.

Information about the eligibility criteria for targeted intervention, the national priorities for the universal service, funding, and RISE advisers.

New cyber security service for schools launched

A free [cyber security service](#) aimed at protecting schools from online threats, including malware, ransomware, and phishing attacks has been launched by the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC).

For those interested and eligible, you can register by requesting your Domain Name System (DNS) provider to sign up through [MyNCSC](#). Schools uncertain about their provider should consult their IT or internet manager.

Unlocking the superpowers of school food

The National Governance Association (NGA) joined fellow members of the School Food Review coalition at a parliamentary event to launch the updated [Superpowers of School Food evidence pack](#). The report highlights current evidence that free school meals (FSM) improve children's health, academic performance, and well-being while also delivering long-term economic benefits.

Governing boards can find out more about their vital role in ensuring children have access to quality, healthy food as part of a whole school approach by completing the NGA LL e-Learning module, [A whole school approach to food](#), produced in partnership with the DfE.

Research highlights disparity in free school meal eligibility

New [research](#) has found significant differences between the number of children estimated to be living in poverty and those who are receiving FSM or pupil premium.

The findings published by the Education Policy Institute identify key reasons for the disparity, including the low-income threshold (£7,400 per year), under-registration, and eligibility rules that ignore factors like housing costs and family size.

In response, the report recommends expanding the coverage of FSM eligibility and introducing autoenrollment for eligible children.

ParentKind has also produced a new report, [The Missing Chapter](#), which urges the government to include reducing school costs in its upcoming Child Poverty Strategy.

Recognising that educational disadvantage affects many more children than those who meet the FSM eligibility criteria, underpins NGA's [Disadvantage: Widening the Lens guidance and toolkits](#).

Gender gap in maths and science performance

According to the latest [report](#) on England's performance in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, boys performance in maths and science has risen significantly to that of girls. The report also found that pupils eligible for FSMs had a lower average score than those not eligible.

In maths at year 9, boys' average score rose (516 to 538), while the score for girls dropped (514 to 512) – this is the first time (since 2003) that a statistically significant gap has been seen at year 9 and was the largest for any of the countries participating in 2023.

It is important that boards understand and can interpret data received to identify trends. There are a few modules on NGA LL in relation to data that may help with understanding and interpreting the data received, such as:

- [Monitoring performance data and targets](#)
- [Progress and attainment: using data to improve educational outcomes](#)
- [Pupil Premium](#).

Pupil premium

Information on [pupil premium funding](#), how school leaders can use it effectively, including support for pupil premium strategy statements. DfE has updated '[Using pupil premium: guidance for school leaders](#)'.

DfE has also produced the [Pupil premium and recovery premium evaluation](#), which may be of interest.

Service Pupils in Schools: Non-statutory guidance

DfE and the Ministry of Defence have produced [non-statutory guidance Information](#) on how to understand and address the needs of Service pupils.

Link between attendance and attainment

DfE have produced a research report, [The link between attendance and attainment in an assessment year](#), which shows that school attendance is associated with higher average academic performance across all pupils from all backgrounds.

In addition, another research report has been produced, [The impact of school absence on lifetime earnings](#) that estimates the monetary impact of one day of school absence in state-funded secondary schools.

Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges

DfE provides [guidance to resources](#) available to develop a whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing.

Curriculum and Assessment Review publishes interim findings

In July 2024, the Government commissioned Professor Becky Francis CBE to convene and chair a panel of experts (the Review Panel) to conduct the Curriculum and Assessment Review. The Review Panel has published an [interim report](#) on their initial findings and setting out the next phase of work which will focus on four key areas:

- Ensuring high standards for all
- Addressing subject specific challenges
- Responding to social and technological change
- Ensuring pathways beyond GCSE and work for all.

Young people to benefit from creative education boost

DfE have announced a new package to support [young people to access high-quality arts education](#) and enrichment activities as well as AI and tech opportunities.

See NGA's [cultural education guidance](#) to explore the benefits of arts and creativity and learn how you can influence its provision in your school or trust. Some suggested considerations/questions for boards:

- Does the school offer a broad and balanced curriculum that develops creativity through cultural education?
- Is the school meeting its statutory curriculum requirements?
- Does the board receive information about the range and impact of cultural activities on pupils' learning, for example as part of the headteacher's report?
- What data is there in the school about pupil engagement with cultural education? What does it indicate about which pupils are the most involved? What are the trends over time in this? If certain groups of pupils aren't engaging with cultural education, do we know why? What are we doing to improve this?
- Does the school work with other schools to share best practice and pool resources?
- How does the school involve parents in their children's cultural education?

Data protection in schools

[Data protection in schools](#) is a collection (toolkit) of the policies and processes schools and multi academy trusts need to protect personal data and respond effectively to a personal data breach.

The section around Record keeping and management, guidance has been added to help create a data retention schedule.

No child left behind in plans to narrow the digital divide in education

To ensure that [no child left behind and to narrow the digital divide in education](#), a [consultation](#) has been launched on plans to make digital standards a requirement for all schools, alongside £45 million investment to improve connectivity

Great British Energy to cut bills for hospitals and schools

[Great British Energy's first project to put rooftop solar panels on 200 schools and 200 hospitals – hopefully cutting energy bills.](#)

See NGAs [Greener Governance guidance](#) to see how your governing board can lead positive change on environmental sustainability.

Political impartiality in schools

The [political impartiality in schools](#) guidance has been updated to remove a foreword from The Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi.

This guidance explains the existing legal requirements relating to political impartiality in schools.

Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill 2024: policy summary/impact assessments

The '[Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill 2024: policy summary notes](#)' and the '[Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill: impact assessments](#)' have been updated to reflect the House of Commons amendments. Original versions are available on The National Archives.

New Value Added Tax (VAT) Guidance for Lettings for Maintained Schools

There has been a recent change in the law and the rules around the VAT treatment of sports and leisure lettings income has changed.

The VAT team have issued new guidance relating to VAT on lettings income and expenditure for maintained schools, which can be found on the School Portal, Finance – W&F folder, sub-folder VAT Guidance. If you have any queries relating to the guidance please contact: laura.searle-hedges@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk in the VAT team.

DfE announces more school places for children with SEND

The DfE has [announced](#) 10,000 new school places for children with SEND. They will be funded through the £740 million capital investment announced in December, which will also support adaptations to make classrooms more accessible and specialist facilities to deliver more targeted support.

This sits alongside a £1 billion investment from the DfE to fund the 44,500 additional places in mainstream schools for children with SEND by 2028. The funding aims to address gaps highlighted by DfE data, that reveals fewer than one in 10 mainstream schools have SEN units or resourced provision and a shortfall of 8,000 places in special schools.

National school breakfast club programme

The [National school breakfast club programme](#) has been updated to reflect that the programme will continue for the 2025 to 2026 academic year.

Further education (FE) corporations and sixth-form college corporations: governance and external governance reviews

The [FE corporations and sixth form college governance guide](#) and [external governance review guide](#) has been updated to replace references to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) with the DfE, since the closure of the ESFA on 31 March 2025.

Help and support for colleges/Further Education (FE)

DfE have updated their information about the range of [help and support](#) available from the Further Education Commissioner, DfE and delivery partners. This includes new guidance around [Effective senior post holder appraisal and chair performance review](#).

Academy trust chair: Apply for a suitability check

DfE have updated information and forms for academy trust chairs of trustees to [apply for a suitability check](#), including an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check to reflect that the call window for identity checks is now 3 to 4 weeks.

Procurement Act 2023

The [Procurement Act 2023](#) came into force on 24 February 2025 to improve the way supplies, services and works are procured for the public sector.

DfE have updated [Buying for schools](#) which provides resources to help when buying goods and services for your school, get better value and be compliant with procurement regulations. In addition, they have added a link to the [guide on procurement](#) in schools and trusts from the NGA.

Education Secretary, Bridget Philipson speeches

Below for your information, are links to speeches made by the Secretary of State:

- [Education Secretary keynote speech at Festival of Childhood](#)
- [Education Secretary's speech at the ASCL conference](#)

Safeguarding

Duties to report child abuse in England

On 24th of January 2025, the House of Commons library published research on the [proposed introduction of a duty to report child abuse in England](#). This legislation seeks to clarify reporting guidelines for professionals, representing a key step in child protection policies. CPOMS has produced a blog, [7 key points on the duty to report child abuse](#), which provides a brief overview and some context.

Governors/trustees may find the NGA Blog, [Navigating the prevent duty: a focus on whole community safeguarding](#), which explores the national conversation, building community resilience, and key questions for governors and trustees.

Use of reasonable force in schools consultation

DfE plans to update the use of reasonable force guidance (2013) and commence legislation which mandates schools to record and report each significant incident where force is used.

The [consultation](#) seeks views on proposed revisions to the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions guidance. The revised guidance will aim to: clarify the use of reasonable force to help school staff use this power safely and appropriately help schools use prevention and de-escalation strategies to minimise the need to use reasonable force and other restrictive interventions.

OFSTED

Curriculum quality improved in schools since education inspection framework (EIF) introduced

Ofsted have published an [evaluation](#) assessing the role that the current EIF has played in improving curriculum quality in schools.

Big Listen action monitoring reports

Ofsted launched the [Big Listen](#) in March 2024. Alongside the Big Listen, Dame Christine Gilbert carried out an [independent learning review](#) into Ofsted's response to the death of headteacher Ruth Perry. Dame Christine Gilbert recommended that Ofsted's actions and other improvement and development initiatives (including those arising from the Big Listen) should be integrated into a single, overarching improvement and development plan.

These [monitoring reports](#) set out Ofsted's actions from the response and will be updated and published after every Board meeting.

School Inspection Data Summary (IDSR): news and updates

[News and information](#) about updates for each IDSR release, including any new functionality, features and bug fixes.

IDSR guide

This [guide](#) provides an overview of the IDSR for primary and secondary schools, including schools with a sixth form and gives guidance on interpreting the data.

The IDSR for all secondary schools has been updated with revised 2024 key stage 4 and level 3 value-added data.

Improving the way Ofsted inspects schools

In early February, Ofsted launched their [consultation](#) on proposed changes to the way Ofsted inspects education. In this [webinar](#), Ofsted outline their proposed changes to the way education providers will be inspected.

Ofsted's Chief Inspector, Sir Martyn Oliver speeches

Below for your information, are links to speeches made by Ofsted's Chief Inspector:

- [Ofsted's Chief Inspector speech at the Nursery World Business Summit](#)
- [Ofsted's Chief Inspector at the SEND and Inclusion Conference: getting it right for everyone](#)
- [Ofsted's Chief Inspector speech at the ASCL Annual Conference](#)
- [Ofsted's Chief Inspector speech to Parentkind](#)
- [Sir Martyn Oliver's speech at the Guildhall.](#)

Actions/Reminders

Sustainability leadership and climate action plans in education

Summer Term: All education settings, including schools, must have a sustainability lead and a climate action plan in place by September 2025. It is suggested you begin your discussions and planning now to meet the September deadline.

DfE has updated [sustainability leadership and climate action plans initiative](#) to include information about developing and storing your climate action plan and the [Let's Go Zero](#) national campaign.

Volunteer Week, 2 to 8 June 2025

It is national volunteers' week 2 to 8 June 2025. Please visit the [website](#) for more information.

Westmorland and Furness Council extend our appreciation and thanks to all school governors and trustees for their invaluable dedication and service.

Your commitment to this challenging role demonstrates a determination to support and nurture the best possible outcomes for children and young people. By offering your time, expertise, and guidance, you help shape policies and decisions that create enriching educational experiences and opportunities. Your efforts and leadership make a lasting impact, ensuring schools continue to thrive and students are prepared for their futures.

Recruitment of governors/trustees

As volunteer's week is approaching, the following links may be helpful in sourcing/recruiting volunteers:

- [NGA, Increasing participation in school and trust governance](#)
- [NGA webinar, Recruitment and retention: Getting volunteers onboard](#)
- [Governor for schools, register your vacancies, access webinars](#)
- [Cumbria Volunteer Service \(CVS\).](#)

To note: via the Governance Professionals/Clerks Cluster Group we have focused specifically some of our meetings on recruitment, induction and retention of governors/trustees. As a result of these meetings, we are developing a session specifically around recruitment, induction and retention as an integral part of board succession planning. Keep a look out for these sessions in the next academic year.

Planning for a strategy day?

If you're preparing to review strategic priorities and re-affirm your school/trust vision, NGA's [Being Strategic guidance](#) provides a framework to refer to on the day and throughout the year which you may find helpful.

Improving staff wellbeing

Governing boards play a vital role in fostering the wellbeing of all staff within their school or trust, including ensuring a healthy work-life balance.

Creating a positive and supportive working environment not only helps attract and retain staff but also has the potential to improve pupil outcomes.

To achieve this, boards should utilise data, such as absence records, alongside feedback from surveys and other channels, to identify factors affecting staff wellbeing.

New research from the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT) has revealed that more than four in five school leaders (82%) have been subject to abuse from parents in the past year, including threats, online abuse, discrimination and violence.

NAHT have called on the government to send a clear signal to parents that this abuse is unacceptable in schools, and to conduct a review of the current complaints procedures.

Governing boards play an important role in supporting school leaders, see NGA LL eLearning module, [Management of workload and wellbeing: the governance role](#). Other organisations that support wellbeing:

- [Well Schools](#) – events, podcasts and reports on creating healthy, happy schools
- [Schools Advisory Service](#) – webinars, mental health service, resources and more to support whole school wellbeing
- [Education Support](#) – staff wellbeing audit and other tools
- [Mentally Healthy Schools](#) – information & advice
- [DfE resources](#) to support and monitor staff wellbeing.

Development/Training

Prevent in education: training for governors and trustees in schools

DfE regional Prevent education coordinators (RPECs) support and improve Prevent delivery in each region of England. Their role includes implementing [Prevent duty](#) responsibilities across schools, FE and higher education (HE) settings.

The RPECs offer, virtual training sessions for school governors/trustees to understand their responsibilities and the importance of the Prevent duty. You will need to register via their [website](#) to attend.

School exclusions: Compliance and best practice for governing boards

As the number of suspensions and exclusions continue to rise, watch [NGA's webinar](#) where the governing board's role in relation to exclusions is considered.

Cumbria Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Cumbria SACRE aims to support high quality teaching and learning in religious education and thoughtful, reflective experiences in collective worship.

You can find more information on their [website](#) including access to their regular newsletters.

In addition, SACRE are holding their annual conference. Although it is specifically for headteachers/teachers, attendance may be beneficial for any governors with the lead for Religious Education. Further details can be found [here](#).

New! Introduction to governance

For newly appointed/elected governors, associate members, trustees and Local Academy Committee Members (LACM) as an introduction to their new role to help build confidence, outline expectations of the board and board members, and to consider the next steps in the development of their governance career:

[Thursday, 22 May 2025, 6pm to 7.30pm.](#)

New! Looking forward to inspection!

This session outlines the current process of an Ofsted Inspection, particularly useful for those who have not yet experienced an inspection. However, may be useful to all governors, trustees and LACM to reflect and consider their involvement and contribution to the process:

[Tuesday, 20 May 2025, 6pm to 7.30pm.](#)

New! Introduction to the role of governance professional/clerk

For newly appointed Clerks/Governance Professionals as an introduction to their new role to help build confidence, outline expectations, and to consider the next steps in the development of their role:

Tuesday, 3 June 2025, 6pm to 7.30pm.

Booking: Places for any of these events can be booked via SLA online.

If you have any issues accessing SLA online, please email the School Development Team at school.development@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk to book your place.

Governance Professional/Clerking Cluster

Details of our last session for this academic year. No cost for any clerk/governance professional who would like to attend:

Thursday, 5 June 2025, 6pm to 7.30pm

Focus on chairs role and board succession planning

Join the meeting now

Meeting ID: **351 357 532 43** Passcode: **9hoQ3f**.

Governors for schools

Governors for schools do provide several webinars everything from induction Taking the chair, SEND etc. The most recent webinar was around [Effective Governor Panel Hearings](#). They also have some [eLearning modules](#) available that you may find helpful.

School to school support

Further to our article 'School to School Support' previously, the GST wish to remind any governors/trustees who feel they may be in a position to provide governance support to other boards on a voluntary basis, to contact the GST for an informal conversation.

We would like to extend this invite to include clerks (governance professionals).

Please contact either your Governor Support Assistant or drop an email to GST.mailbox.WAF@cumbria.gov.uk to discuss further or if you would just like a little bit more detail.

GST Contact Details

The GST continues to offer advice, support, and guidance, specific to your boards needs and can be contacted as follows:

Jane Lees

Governor Support Assistant

Email:

- jane.lees@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk
- GST.mailbox.WAF@cumbria.gov.uk

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