

Governor Briefing 4

20 April 2026

18:00-19:00



Agenda

1. Welcome and Service Manager update
2. Governor Recruitment with *Governors for Schools*
3. Safeguarding update
4. Early Years update
5. Service Pupils reminder
6. Latest updates and reminders from the Team
7. Thank you



Welcome

- Update on the new structure for September
- Introduction to **Tricia Bunn**, substantive School Improvement and Governance Service Manager



Governor Recruitment

Harriet Bennis

Governors for Schools Partnerships Team Manager

Governors for Schools

Building exceptional boards

[Governors for Schools - Effective Governors, Excellent Schools](#)



Our Services

[School and trust services - Governors for Schools](#)



Our free-to-access governor recruitment service



Our **Free-To-Access** Matching Service

Step 1: Schools manage vacancy(s) via their online dashboard

- You can create an account and register vacancies [here](#).

Step 2: We match Volunteers to a Vacancy

- This service is **volunteer-led**. This means that when a new volunteer applies, we open a search to find a local vacancy that matches their skillset, travel preferences and interests. We will introduce the volunteer to a vacancy contact once a match has been agreed.

Step 3: Vacancy contacts keep us updated

- Keep us updated with progress so that we can support the volunteer until we hear that they have been/ will be formally appointed.

How do we recruit volunteers?

Here are some examples



Corporate partners

University partners

Social media channels



Thank you!
Questions?

Info@governorsforschools.org.uk



Education Safeguarding update

Jo Lloyd

OCC Service Manager: LADO and ESAT

Children accessing Alternative Education Provision

In 24/25- 49% of schools had at least 1 pupil access Alternative Provision
1109 children have accessed AP
201 of these children were subject to a social care plan- this is 18%.

- Is the provision safe, appropriate- on the Approved providers list?
- Day to day safeguarding- are they where they should be?
- How much are they going?
- Maintaining relationship and keeping in touch
- Monitoring progress
- Having a plan to return to school or what's the long-term plan?

Arranging Alternative Provision - guide for LAs and schools

- The commissioning school continues to retain safeguarding duties towards the child and should therefore be satisfied that the provision is in a safe environment as well as meeting the child's pastoral and educational needs.
- Commissioners should obtain written confirmation from the alternative provider that appropriate safeguarding checks have been carried out on individuals working at the establishment
- The commissioner should always know where the child is during school hours.
- Reviews should be frequent enough (at least half-termly) to assure that the provision is achieving its objectives, that the child is regularly attending and that the placement continues to be safe and meets the child's needs.

Do you know....

How many children are attending an AEP?

What does their timetable look like?

Is the school reviewing at least every 6 weeks?

What's the plan?

Which AEP is being used? How are you sure it is safe and appropriate?

Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools

Guidance for schools in England

April 2026

KCSIE 2025- There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff in schools and colleges to use 'reasonable force' to safeguard children

KCSIE 2026- There are **limited** circumstances when it is appropriate for staff in schools to use 'reasonable force' to safeguard children.

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances.

To prevent or stop a pupil from:

1. causing injury to themselves or others
2. committing a criminal offence
3. damaging property
4. causing disorder among pupils at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise

Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions should be adequately trained in its safe and lawful use and in preventative strategies

Is it necessary? Is it proportionate? Have you considered the pupils welfare?

Guidance contains-

- minimum recording requirements
- minimum reporting requirements to parents
- Guidance around policy- On the use of restrictive interventions. The policy may be part of the school's behaviour policy or a standalone document.

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026

Consultation live- 12th Feb 26- 22nd April 26

Proposed changes:

- **Part 1- Safeguarding information for all staff**
- Section 3 of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework should be read alongside KCSIE where children aged 0 to 5 attend school-based nurseries or reception classes.
- Support before statutory interventions- universal services, community based Early Help, targeted early help- Family Help (involving children's services) – FH workers can lead plans up to and including S17. (child in need)
- Serious violence (increased information) it is a continuing safeguarding concern, schools play a key role in protecting children from violence, 'teachable moments', access to **trusted adults**.
- Children that schools should be alert to needing support now includes – '**has been repeatedly removed from the classroom and on a part time timetable**'.
- All who work directly with children should read Annex A.

- **Part 2- The management of safeguarding**
- Sport- exception in the Equality Act in relation to single-sex sport that allows separation according to biological sex.

Toilets- schools must not allow children into toilets for the opposite biological sex including when schools are responding to a request to support any degree of social transition for children questioning their gender. (Also guidance on changing rooms and showers for children aged 11)

Transfer of files- good practice for a **conversation** to take place between DSLs at both settings, where there are issues or concerns.

Teaching safeguarding now suggested to include understanding online harms- sharing images, deepfakes, pornography and misogyny

Guidance and resources around use of AI.

Mobile phone policy- mobile-free environments by default, anything other is exception only.

Limited circumstances when it is appropriate to use reasonable force- link to new Restrictive Interventions guidance

Link to voluntary national standards for non-school alternative provision

Schools have 4 key roles in relation to mental health- promoting mental wellbeing, preventing observing, identifying, ensuring targeted support, liaison with specialist services

Focus on being alert to needs of young carers and more guidance on barriers for children with SEND, section on safeguarding children with medical conditions

Significant guidance on children who are questioning their gender following the The Cass Review including bullying, social transition, working with parents, review.

Part 3- Safer recruitment

Online searches of shortlisted candidates changed to a **search via an online search engine**

Single Central Record template included

Embedded guidance on children staying with host families (no longer an annex)

Part 4- Allegation management- specifically includes Trainee Teachers

Part 5- Child on child sexual harassment and sexual violence

Recognising the escalatory nature of misogyny and the benefits of early identification to support their approach to minimising the risk of harmful sexual behaviour, sexual harassment and sexual violence

Children may **struggle** to verbally disclose sexual abuse, change from 'may not find it easy'-they may show signs or behave in ways that signal distress

Risk assessment is now a Risk and needs assessment following a report of sexual violence

Annex A is now Further information- additional information about specific forms of abuse and issues- those who work directly with children should read it

Annex B – role of DSL- Availability- Schools should implement robust cover arrangements when DSL is unavailable due to illness, leave etc, could include a confidential shared mailbox

Evaluate My School- Safeguarding



We will be using **Evaluate My School** for the annual safeguarding self-assessment audit (175/157) for this year.

Many of your schools are already registered and using this system for SEND self-assessment.

Dates-

13.07.26 opens

11.09.26 complete section 1 deadline

27.11.26 closes

Early Years update

Michelle Jenkins

Foundation Years Leader

Sharon Hunt

Early Years and Childcare Quality Improvement Lead Officer

Enabling children to achieve the Writing ELG

Early writing and phonological awareness
What matters most for leaders

Oxfordshire Early Years & Childcare Quality
Improvement Team

Why focus on writing now?

- Oxfordshire outcomes are strong overall, but not equitable
- A significant Free School Meals (**FSM**) **gap** remains by the end of the EYFS
- Writing is often the least secure Early Learning Goal (ELG), and is what teachers identify as the hardest to achieve
- Leadership decisions directly affect children's chances of success

Let's look at the ELG for writing...

ELG: Writing

Children at the expected level of development will:

- ✓ Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.
- ✓ Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters.
- ✓ Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.

REMEMBER – We're only assessing against these statements!

What does the Writing ELG actually require?

To achieve the ELG, children **need to**:

- Form letters accurately
- Write recognisable words
- Write simple phrases or sentences
- Apply their phonics knowledge in writing

The ELG is **not** about:

- Length, speed, neatness, writing stamina, oral composition

Myths Leaders Should Challenge

What the Writing Framework does **NOT** say

- Children must sit at tables all day
- Writing only happens in phonics
- Worksheets are required
- Writing must always be adult-directed
- Children should not attempt writing in play

Removing myths reduces pressure and improves outcomes

The writing framework

“When making a judgement about ‘writing simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others’, **children do not need to be able to compose the phrases and sentences themselves (dictated sentences can be assessed) and they do not need to write extended pieces.** A ‘simple’ phrase could be *‘clap hands’* and a ‘simple’ sentence could be *‘The man is happy’.*”

What really helps children succeed in writing

- Regular handwriting and fine-motor practice
- Time for oral composition
- Dictation and supported sentence writing
- Writing opportunities across provision
- High-quality adult modelling of language

What is phonological awareness?

- A listening skill
- Focused on sounds in spoken language
- Not the same as phonics
- Does not involve letters or print

Strong phonological awareness underpins:

- Spelling
- Sentence writing
- Independent application of phonics

Language foundations support writing success

Children who can:

- Hear sounds in words
- Blend sounds orally
- Use rich vocabulary

Find it easier to:

- Spell words
- Write sentences
- Write independently with confidence

Leaders can enable writing success by:

- Protecting time for handwriting and fine motor
- Supporting staff training and confidence
- Ensuring consistent expectations across Reception
- Focusing on barriers, not labels
- Creating space for embedding practice, not overload

Effective leadership questions

- Are writing ELG judgements accurate and consistent?
- Which children are not on track — and why?
- How are disadvantaged writers being supported?
- What evidence shows training has impacted practice?

It's not too late....

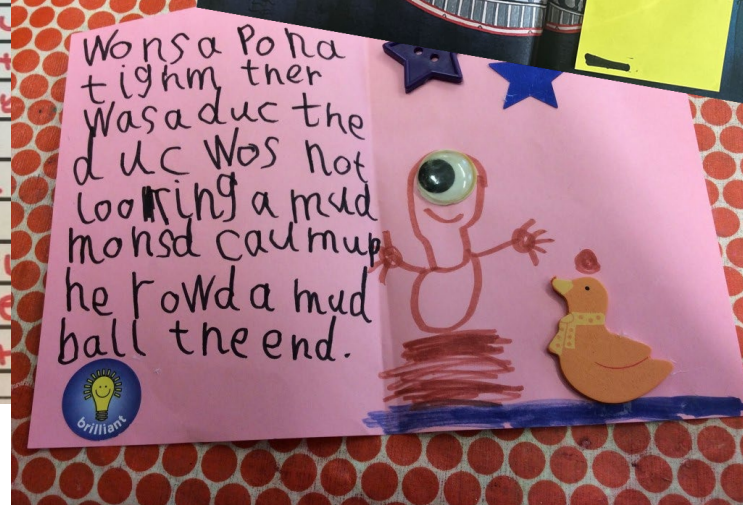
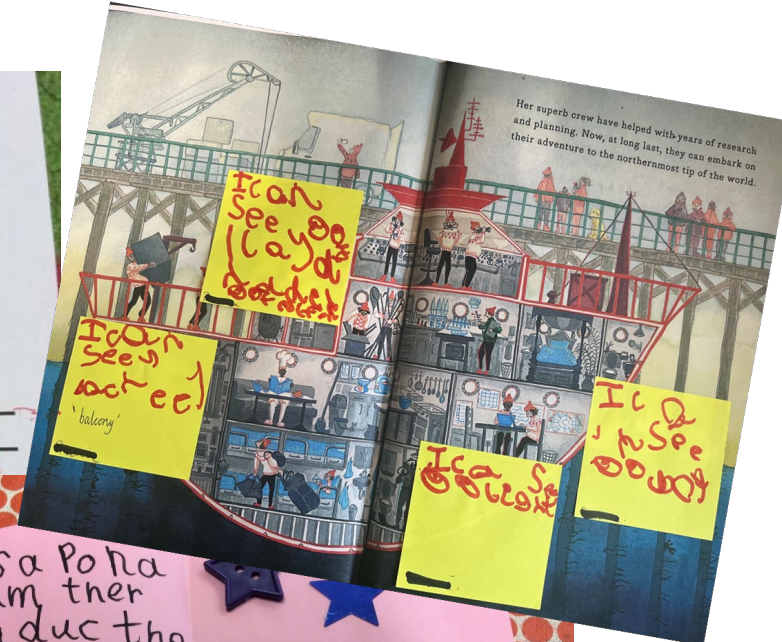
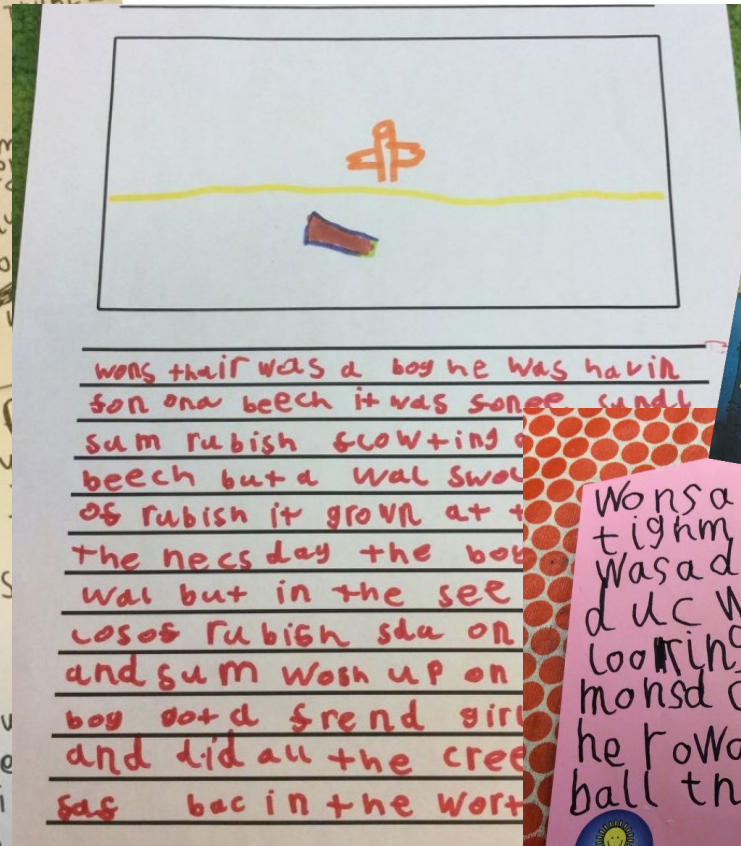
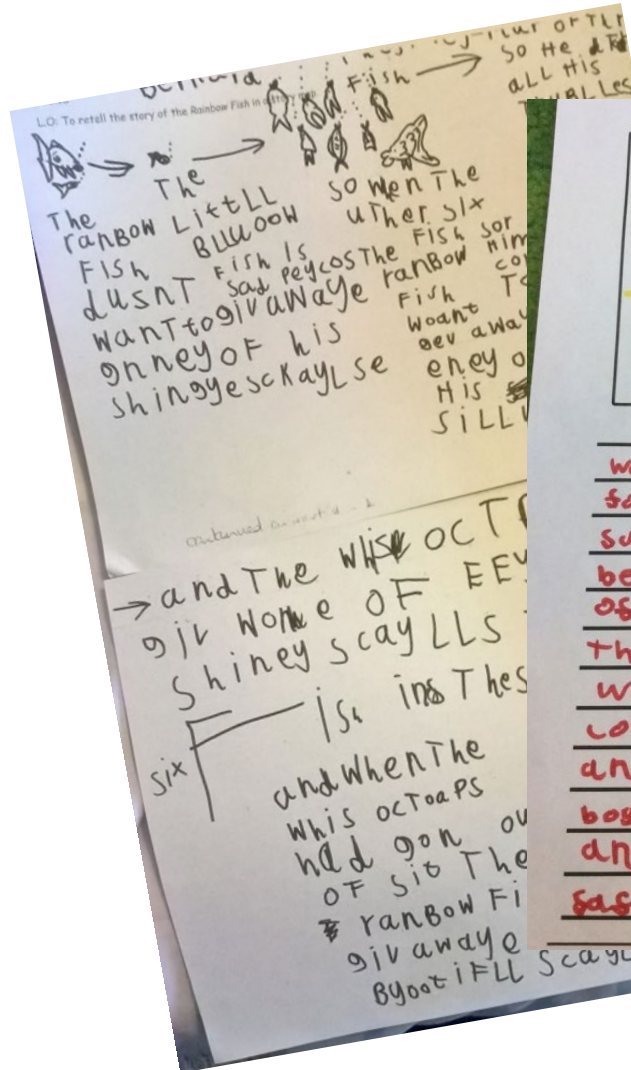
The Magic Writing Pot



What ingredients do we need in the pot?

- Phonological Awareness
- Phonic Knowledge
- Gross Motor Skills
- Fine Motor Skills
- Opportunities for oral composition
- Handwriting practice
- Dictation
- Vocabulary
- Writing equipment (a sharp pencil or a working felt-tip pen!)
- Writing prompts
- A celebratory audience

The goal is not the goal... we must never underestimate what reception children are capable of ...



But they're not ready for year 1!

- Children reach the Writing ELG in different ways and at different depths
- Some children will already show features of Year 1–ready writing
- Others may meet the ELG securely, but still need:
 - More time to write with independence
 - Support with stamina, sentence construction or transcription
 - The Writing ELG is a threshold, not a ceiling
 - There is no ELG judgement for “Year 1 readiness” in writing
 - Getting the ELG does not automatically mean a child is ready for Year 1 writing demands – and that is expected.
- Year 1 staff need to be ready to meet the needs of the cohort of children who will be joining them in September. Transition conversations must be prioritised.

In summary:

Achieving the Writing ELG is not about:

- Doing more
- Formalising too soon
- Raising unrealistic expectations

It is about:

- Strong foundations
- High-quality universal provision
- Clear leadership priorities
- Equity of opportunity for all children

Implications for Governors:

Asking questions of leaders

- Are staff clear on what the Writing ELG actually requires?
- Are judgements accurate and consistent? How do you know?
- Which children are not on track, and why?
- How strong are language and phonological awareness foundations?
- Do children have purposeful, motivating reasons to write?
- How are disadvantaged children being supported?
- How strong is Reception–Year 1 transition in writing?

Implications for Governors:

Visiting the school – what might you look out for?

Are children in EY writing? Do they have opportunities to write?

- **ELG clarity:** Staff can explain what the Writing ELG requires (and what it does not).
- **Purposeful writing:** Children have meaningful, motivating reasons to write across provision.
- **Strong foundations:** Language, phonological awareness, fine motor and handwriting are visible priorities.
- **Inclusive practice:** Children at risk of not meeting the ELG are supported and included in daily practice.
- **Consistent approach:** Expectations and routines for writing are similar across the Reception team and link into Year 1.

EYFS Profile handbook

The EYFS Profile is a statutory assessment of children's development at the end of the EYFS, usually the end of the academic year in which the child turns 5 (reception year).

Each child's level of development is assessed against 17 early learning goals (ELGs) across all 7 areas of learning in the EYFS.

(EYFSP Handbook 2025)

[Early years foundation stage profile handbook - GOV.UK](#)

[Help for early years providers : ELG: Writing](#)

Service Pupils

Steph Fawdry

Headteacher RAF Benson Primary School

Supporting Service Pupils

Steph Fawdry



Who is Steph?

- Headteacher at RAF Benson since 2010 – No prior Service involvement – learnt along the way
- Current Chair of Service Children in State Schools
www.sciss.org.uk
- Sits on the Management Group of the SCiP alliance
- Sits on the MODLAP group

Supporting Service Children



How Oxfordshire supports Schools with Service pupils

Service Pupil Promise from Oxfordshire County Council

- Following on from our successful conference in September 2019, we made a promise to the pupils from Service Families who attend Oxfordshire schools. We have collated their views of life in school as a pupil from a service background and we invite all schools to share a copy of [Oxfordshire County Council's 'Promise'](#) with every Service family pupil.
- We ask that all schools reflect on their own practice so that together we can help all pupils from Service backgrounds.

Toolkit for the support of Service Children

- [This Toolkit](#) is to support all Oxfordshire schools to access advice and support for Service pupils entitled to the SPP. The SPP sits alongside the Pupil Premium grant for pupils from a disadvantaged background and in most schools the Pupil Premium coordinator will lead on provision for these pupils. Information on how the school is supporting Service pupils should be included in the school's SPP strategy.

SCiP Alliance - 'Thriving Lives' Toolkit

7 principles of effective support



The 7 principles of effective support

	Principle	Vision
1	Our approach is clear	Leaders' understanding and approach ensure resources and policies improve Service children's outcomes.
2	Wellbeing is supported	Tailored pastoral provision supports Service children's mental health and wellbeing.
3	Achievement is maximised	Teaching, assessment and support ensure the continuity of Service children's learning and progression.
4	Transition is effective	Systems and support ensure seamless transitions for Service children arriving at and leaving school.
5	Children are heard	Service children's diverse voices are heard and inform the support they receive.
6	Parents are engaged	Strong home-school partnerships help Service families feel valued as part of the school community.
7	Staff are well-informed	Supportive training and networks ensure all staff understand and support each Service child.

Grant Funding Opportunities



Armed Forces Families Fund
Early Years Programme

CLOSING DATE: 15 Jul 2026

AF3: Early Years programme

The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust will award grants of between £5,000 and £80,000 on behalf of the MOD's Armed Forces Families Fund Early Years programme.



Any questions?

Contact Steph by email: head.2450@raf-benson.oxon.sch.uk

Governor Services Update

Helen Tate

OCC Governor Support Officer

Attendance

- Attendance is an increasingly important performance indicator in the work of the board covering, for example, safeguarding, inclusion, belonging, access to education and aspirations for all.
- Our new question bank is now available to help boards to:
 - Provide support and challenge to their schools
 - Record governor awareness, actions, and impact in minutes.
- [Attendance in Schools - Question Bank](#)

Every child achieving and thriving

The schools white paper headlines

- Overall ambitions for pupils
- SEND system reform
- Support for disadvantaged pupils
- Formal collaboration and MATs
- Parental collaboration and engagement
- Improved complaints process
- Exclusion and behaviour

[Every child achieving and thriving - GOV.UK](#)

[The schools white paper: summary for governing boards | National Governance Association](#)

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026

Consultation open until 22 April at 11:59pm:

[Keeping children safe in education: 2026 proposed revisions - Department for Education - Citizen Space](#)

Draft for consultation:

[Keeping children safe in education 2026: draft for consultation](#)

KS2 SATS responsibilities

[2026 key stage 2 assessment and reporting arrangements - GOV.UK](#)

This could include:

- School visit beforehand to check test materials have been stored correctly and that access arrangements have been applied for.
- School visit during the test week to check:
 - the tests are administered properly, in line with the timetable
 - the process for reporting any issue is known.

You may also be asked to be an **independent observer** by your Head.

Your Local Authority may also monitor before, during or after the KS2 test period if your school is selected.

[Key Stage 2 SATs: governors' role | GovernorHub](#)

Appraisal- where are you?

- Interim reviews so nothing unexpected
- External adviser for the next cycle. *Now available to book through The Buyback*
- Training for the governor subgroup- **23 June 2026** [Book here](#)
- Updates on the appraisal processes within the wider school team
- Next appraisal cycle begins on **01 September 2026**



Oxfordshire Governors' Association

Run by governors for governors

- The independent voice of Oxfordshire governors
- Free open meetings with topical speakers- all are welcome
- Website with 'Busy Governor Guides'

OGA can:

- Represent you at Oxfordshire County Council and the National Governance Association
- Respond to local and national consultations
- Help with volunteers for panels etc.

Subscribe via The Buyback- only £15 per year for your school

[Oxfordshire Governors' Association](#)



Budget reminders

- Submission dates:

The statutory deadline to submit your school's **Governing Body approved budget** to the local authority via Education Financial Services (EFS) is:

1st May 2026 or

8th May for Special schools

- Buyback of traded services now open!

including governor training and the Clerking Service

Speak to your school business manager or school office who will have access to the details



Finally...

Thank you to you all.

