

**Oxfordshire County Council
Governor Services**

Clerking Service

Service Level Agreement 2026/27

A Primary School

**2026/27 Meetings: 6
£2,694.00**

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CLERKING SERVICE SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT 2026/27

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Clerking Service provides Governing Boards with a professional, trained and supported Governance Professional.
- 1.2. The standard subscription provides the services of a Governance Professional for 60 hours per academic year which covers:
- 1.3. The Clerking of 6 full board meetings for the year (10 hours per meeting).
- 1.4. The Clerking of additional meetings remains an option where the service has capacity. Further details are provided on page 14.
- 1.5. Our children deserve the best possible education. Everyone involved in governance, whether sitting on a board or providing Clerking services to it, must strive for the highest professional standards.
- 1.6. Oxfordshire County Council Governor Services are champions for high quality school governance and aim to ensure that governors and governance professionals have the necessary skills to deliver it.
- 1.7. We take an active interest in the quality of governance in schools. We encourage and support high standards, recognising where a school could improve and enabling boards to do so.
- 1.8. The Department for Education (DfE) recognises that professional-quality Clerking is critical to the effectiveness of a governing board in fulfilling its core strategic functions.
- 1.9. Boards subscribing to, or leaving, the Service part way through the financial year are charged or refunded proportionately, after allowing for the relevant notice period. The charges are reviewed each year.
- 1.10. Full details of the charges relating to the different options available through the Service are contained in Appendix 1.
- 1.11. The Clerking of complaints, pupil exclusions, staff grievance/discipline committees and other panel meetings is **not** included as part of the standard service. If a Governance Professional is needed to undertake this type of work the board must contact the Clerking Service Team Lead for further advice.

2. Professional Clerking to enable effective governance:

2.1. Strategic Leadership

Strategic leadership sets strategy and champions the school's culture, vision and ethos by:

- working with school leaders to set a clear vision, with a focus on pupil progress, achievement and wellbeing
- communicating the vision throughout the school and reviewing it regularly (in church schools, the vision and values are underpinned by the trust deed)
- defining the values of the school, modelling these as the governing body, and ensuring these are embedded throughout the school
- defining medium and long-term goals, including development and improvement priorities
- monitoring and reviewing progress against agreed strategic goals
- implementing processes to listen and respond to parents and carers, pupils, staff, local communities and, where applicable, employers
- initiating and leading strategic change in the best interest of children, young people and the school, advocating the reasons and benefits to all stakeholders
- managing and monitoring risks including the school's risk tolerance in line with strategic priorities and school improvement plans (SIPs)
- embedding appropriate strategies and risk management at every level of governance
- regularly reviewing governance effectiveness, including through external reviews of governance
- ensuring the wellbeing of staff and that staff workload is managed
- making informed decisions on whether to form, join or grow a group of schools, supported by strong due diligence and, where applicable, working with the appropriate religious body
- adopting a whole-school approach to safeguarding arrangements and child protection, ensuring it is central to the school's processes
- preserving and developing the religious ethos of the school, where it has a religious character, by working alongside the appropriate religious body

2.2. Accountability

Strategic decisions that aim to improve educational standards and financial performance by:

- inspecting pupil progress, attainment and financial information and comparing these with local and national benchmarks over time
- monitoring and overseeing school improvement and financial health
- challenging school leaders when necessary and providing appropriate support
- implementing a transparent system for school leaders to manage performance, linked to defined strategic priorities
- effectively overseeing employee performance and the framework for pay and conditions of service
- having a regular cycle of meetings and appropriate processes to:
 - support business and financial planning
 - manage the school within the available resources
 - ensure regularity, propriety and value for money

2.3. People

Effective governance should involve people with the right skills, experience, behaviours and capacity who:

- understand the purpose and importance of governance and the differing roles of strategic and operational leadership
- are committed to, understand and have time for the role
- are appointed through a transparent process against a clear role specification
- bring a diverse range of perspectives for robust decision making and work collectively for the benefit of the school in accordance with the code of conduct
- understand the educational setting and the cultural and religious contexts of the school and the communities it serves
- use active succession planning to ensure the governing body and the school has the leadership and people it needs to remain effective

The governing body **must** have:

- a chair or co-chairs, supported by one or more vice-chairs, to lead and set the culture of the governing body
- a governance professional (clerk) to:
 - provide expert procedural advice and administrative support
 - manage the efficient and compliant operation of the governing body

2.4. **Governance Structures**

Clearly defined governance roles, responsibilities and accountabilities reinforced through:

- appropriate governing body and committee arrangements that:
 - reflect the school's scale and structure
 - enable robust oversight
- clear separation between the roles of strategic governance oversight and operational school leadership
- positive relationships that encourage a professional culture
- processes for appropriate communication between all levels of governance and to pupils, parents, carers, staff and communities, to support transparency in decision making
- governance arrangements, remits and delegations that are understood by all those involved in governance, including school leaders
- publishing up-to-date and accessible information on governance arrangements

2.5. **Compliance**

Governing bodies comply with statutory and contractual requirements by:

- ensuring awareness of its responsibilities under:
 - education and employment legislation
 - financial regulations
 - the School Information Regulations (and other publishing requirements that may be found in conditions of grant)
 - [Keeping children safe in education \(KCSIE\)](#), relating to safeguarding and safer recruitment
 - [Equality Act 2010](#) including the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) (PSED) to actively promote equality and diversity throughout the school
- ensuring they are aware of, and comply with, legal duties in religious measures and laws where applicable, for example, Church of England and Catholic Canon Law
- effective planning to ensure key duties such as inclusion and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) duties are undertaken effectively across the school
- setting and monitoring of the school or school's budget

- overseeing and regularly monitoring the impact of pupil premium and other targeted funding stream conditions

2.6. **Evaluation**

Regular evaluation to monitor and improve the quality and impact of governance by:

- completing regular skills audits, aligned to the school's strategic plan, to identify skill and knowledge gaps and inform:
 - recruitment needs
 - training and development plans
 - induction of new governors, including training on KCSIE and keeping pupils safe online in education
- regularly reviewing the governing body effectiveness, how well governors work together and governors' performance and their participation in discussions
- commissioning external reviews to get an independent assessment of the governing body's effectiveness and areas for development, particularly at key growth or transition points
- following legal requirements for document retention and accurately documenting:
 - evidence of the governing body and its committee's discussions and decisions
 - any evaluation of the governing body's impact

3. The Clerking Service responsibilities

The Service will:

- 3.1. Provide a Governance Professional who is suitably qualified by virtue of in-service training, and ensure their ongoing professional development
- 3.2. Provide training, mentoring and access to all relevant reference materials to enable the Governance Professional to effectively carry out their role
- 3.3. Endeavour to provide in-person or virtual cover for the Governance Professional where they are unable to attend a meeting
- 3.4. Provide an alternative Governance Professional, as soon as practicable, if the Governance Professional is unable to continue with their duties (the Governance Professional is required to give notice)
- 3.5. Liaise with the chair, the Governance Professional and the school on any changes to these terms and conditions
- 3.6. Provide the administrative and payroll functions relating to the recruitment and employment of the Governance Professional
- 3.7. Continually review the effectiveness of the Service
- 3.8. Process charges and refunds in line with the policy in appendix 1
- 3.9. The Governance Professional is employed by Oxfordshire County Council. The school or academy shall not directly or indirectly employ or engage any services from their Governance Professional. If the school or academy breaches this provision it may be liable for a compensation fee. The fee is a genuine pre-estimate of the financial loss that The Service would incur in recruiting and training a new Governance Professional.

4. The Governance Professional's responsibilities

- 4.1. The Governance Professional will:
 - 4.1.1. Attend an introductory meeting, with their headteacher and Chair when assigned to the board.
 - 4.1.2. Establish, with the Chair, a timetable for full board meetings for the academic year and add these to the Governance Platform calendar.
 - 4.1.3. Governance Professionals will report to the Clerking Service Team Lead for line management purposes and regarding any change to the number of meetings being supported.
 - 4.1.4. Governance Professionals will attend initial training and induction on appointment. Governance Professionals will then be expected to attend mandatory training (for which reimbursement will be provided) throughout the academic year.

- 4.1.5. Governance Professionals will participate in Oxfordshire County Council's performance appraisal scheme (12:3:2). These sessions will be either telephone, MS Teams or face to face sessions. Arrangements will be made to ensure the conversations are held at a mutually convenient date, time, and location.
- 4.1.6. Advise the Clerking Service Team Lead of any additional hours agreed to work on an ad-hoc basis, so that the school can be invoiced accordingly
- 4.1.7. Keep an accurate record of any additional work undertaken, promptly submit monthly claim forms and additional work forms to agendas.minutes@oxfordshire.gov.uk
- 4.1.8. Notify the board and the Clerking Service Team Lead, as soon as possible, if they are unable to attend a meeting, so that a substitute Governance Professional can be arranged, where possible
- 4.1.9. Provide the board and Clerking Service Team Lead with as much notice as possible, but a minimum of one month, if they wish to resign as a Governance Professional (to allow time to find a replacement or put in cover arrangements)
- 4.2. **Advice and guidance**
The Governance Professional provides independent and expert advice to the governing board on its duties and functions, contributing to the efficient conduct of the board.
- 4.2.1. Advising the board on its core functions and DfE governance advice, including the Maintained Schools Governance Guide 2024 and the Academy Trust Governance Guide 2024.
- 4.2.2. Advising the governing board on relevant legislation and procedural matters where necessary, before, during and after meetings.
- 4.2.3. Informing the governing board of any changes to its responsibilities because of a change in school status or changes in the relevant legislation
- 4.2.4. Advising the board on the regulatory framework for governance (instruments of government and articles of association and relevant Acts)
- 4.2.5. Offering advice on governance best practice, including on committee structures and self-evaluation
- 4.2.6. Informing the board of statutory policies
- 4.2.7. Ensure new governors have access to appropriate documents, including any agreed code of conduct and access to the Online Governance Platform if appropriate
- 4.3. **Organisation and administration of meetings**
The Governance Professional prepares for and administers meetings, allowing the board to make effective use of their time and focus on strategic matters. The Governance Professional supports the smooth and effective running of meetings by:

- 4.3.1. Working with the chair and headteacher to prepare a focused agenda for governing board meetings
- 4.3.2. Liaising with those preparing papers to make sure they are available on time, and distribute the agenda and papers as required by legislation
- 4.3.3. Ensuring meetings are quorate, inclusive, and well structured.
- 4.3.4. Recording the attendance of governors at meetings on the Online Governance Platform (including any apologies, minuting whether they have been accepted or not), and take appropriate action in relation to absences.
- 4.3.5. Drafting minutes of meetings, indicating who is responsible for any agreed actions with time scales, and send to the Chair and Headteacher within 7 working days of the meeting
- 4.3.6. Circulating the reviewed minutes to all governors/members of the committee, the executive leader and other relevant bodies within the timescale agreed with the governing board
- 4.3.7. Following up on any agreed action points with those responsible and informing the chair of progress

4.4. **Governing board membership**

Effective boards need members with the right skills, experience, qualities, and capacity. To support the board's proper constitution, it is the responsibility of the Governance Professional to:

- 4.4.1. Advise governors and appointing bodies in advance of the expiry of a governor's term of office and the impact of this on the board's capacity, diversity, and skills mix.
- 4.4.2. Provide guidance on open and transparent vacancy filling processes and efficient procedures for election and appointment.
- 4.4.3. Maintain the Online Governance Platform and ensure correct publication of information about governors such as pecuniary interests.
- 4.4.4. Remind the board of their responsibilities regarding Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and other relevant checks and ensure updates are recorded on the Online Governance Platform.
- 4.4.5. Maintain the Online Governance Platform so that meeting attendance records are accurate and advise the chair of potential disqualification through lack of attendance.
- 4.4.6. Advise the governing board on succession planning for all governing board roles.

4.5. **Managing Information**

The Governance Professional supports the board in maintaining records of policies and procedural documents.

- 4.5.1. Maintain the Online Governance Platform ensuring up to date records are kept of the names, contact details and category of members and their terms of office.

Inform the governing board and the relevant authority of any changes to its membership.

- 4.5.2. Signed copies of confidential minutes are kept securely within restricted folders on the Online Governance Platform and stored separately from the public minutes.

4.6. **Safeguarding**

The Board must be committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. The Governance Professional will remind the Governing Board of its safeguarding responsibilities:

- 4.6.1. A Safeguarding Governor must be appointed
- 4.6.2. Governors must read and understand the latest version of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) and ensure they comply with their duties in legislation.
- 4.6.3. All governors receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training.
- 4.6.4. Safeguarding is included on every agenda.
- 4.6.5. Governors have completed a DBS and section 128 check
- 4.6.6. Staff safeguarding is in place

5. The Governing Board's responsibilities

5.1. The Governing Board will:

- 5.1.1. Ensure that meetings are held at times and dates convenient for their Governance Professional. If a meeting needs to be re-arranged, it will check the Governance Professional's availability before agreeing the revised date. Any additional meetings are notified to the Clerking Service Team Lead.
- 5.1.2. Make every effort to ensure meetings do not exceed 2 hours
- 5.1.3. Ensure that the Governance Professional is not asked to assume duties outside of their agreement without mutual consent and the agreement of the Clerking Service Team Lead (eg undertaking governor elections and skills audits)
- 5.1.4. Ensure any papers to be considered at a meeting, including committee minutes, are available to the Governance Professional in time to go out with the agenda
- 5.1.5. Look after the well-being of their Governance Professional
- 5.1.6. Discuss any day-to-day performance issues with the Governance Professional informally and advise the Clerking Service Team Lead
- 5.1.7. Formally refer to the Clerking Service Team Lead any day-to-day performance issues it cannot resolve locally

- 5.1.8. Take part in the annual Quality Assurance process and submit feedback to the Clerking Service Team Lead
- 5.1.9. Provide a term's notice, by email to the Clerking Service Team Lead and their Governance Professional, if it wishes to:
 - Withdraw from the Service
 - Reduce the contracted hours for the year (boards are unable to subscribe to less than 6 full board meetings per year)

The change will be effective from the first day of the following term as per the chart below. This is to allow the Service time to find the Governance Professional alternative work with other boards to offset the reduction in their hours.

Change notified to Clerking Service	Effective date change
Summer term	1 st January
Autumn term	1 st April
Spring term	1 st September

- 5.2. The Chair will:
 - 5.2.1. Attend an introductory meeting, with their headteacher and Governance Professional, when a new Governance Professional is assigned to the board
 - 5.2.2. Return the approved minutes to the Governance Professional within 7 days of receipt of the draft
 - 5.2.3. Maintain appropriate communications with the Governance Professional to enable them to fulfil their duties effectively and to agreed timescales
 - 5.2.4. Look after the well-being of their Governance Professional
 - 5.2.5. Discuss any day-to-day performance issues with the Governance Professional informally and advise the Clerking Service Team Lead
 - 5.2.6. Formally refer to the Clerking Service Team Lead any day-to-day performance issues that cannot be resolved locally.
 - 5.2.7. Take part in the Quality Assurance process submitting feedback and evidence where appropriate to the Clerking Service Team Lead.
 - 5.2.8. Complete an evaluation of the Service when requested

6. Administrative procedures

Whilst the working arrangements between Governance Professionals and boards will vary from one setting to another, to ensure effectiveness and consistency both the Governance Professional and the Governing Board/School will be expected to provide a baseline service:

6.1. Background information

New Governance Professionals will need the information below to help them be effective in their role. All such information will be treated as confidential.

- Details of the board's committee structure, committee chairs and membership
- A list of current staff and their responsibilities
- A note of any door entry
- Information relating to photocopying/printing systems.
- Details of the times that the school is open
- Any other information by mutual agreement
- Electronic copies of:
 - The agenda and minutes of the last two meetings.
 - The board's standing orders and code of conduct.
 - The terms of reference of the board's committees.
 - The school improvement plan.
 - Instrument of Government (Maintained Schools)
 - Scheme of delegation (Academies/Free Schools)
 - Articles of Association (Academies/Free Schools)

7. Stationery, postage and equipment

- 7.1. The Governance Professional is an employee of Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) and therefore will be provided with an OCC laptop
- 7.2. The Governance Professional will use the Online Governance Platform to store electronic files (minutes, agendas, reports etc)
- 7.3. Schools will be expected to provide limited amounts of stationery (paper/envelopes etc) where necessary and appropriate to enable the Governance Professional to fulfil their role.
- 7.4. The expectation is that use of postal communications will be kept to a minimum and that where possible all governance business will be managed electronically (via the Online Governance Platform, a GDPR compliant information management system).
- 7.5. If paperwork is to be posted, and it is not going from the school, the Governance Professional should be supplied with stamps.
- 7.6. The Governance Professional will keep postage records in a format agreed with the school, where appropriate.
- 7.7. The Governance Professional will take responsibility to file electronic versions of minutes, agenda, correspondence and supporting reports on the Online Governance Platform.
- 7.8. The school must ensure that signed, official minutes are held at the school and are available upon public request
- 7.9. Electronic versions of the paperwork can be provided to the school office or relevant member of staff to add to the school's website.
- 7.10. It is not the Governance Professional's responsibility to set up or maintain the governors' resource library, the school website or GIAS.

8. Correspondence, photocopying and printing

- 8.1. The Clerking Service works on the premise of paperless governance. The Governance Professional will, wherever possible send correspondence and papers for meetings to the Governing Board by the Online Governance Platform.
- 8.2. Mutually agreeable arrangements should be made for the distribution of correspondence received at the school for governors, particularly any items marked 'urgent' or 'confidential'.
- 8.3. The Governance Professional will prepare a correspondence list, where required, to go out with the full board meeting agenda.
- 8.4. Although paperless governance is the preference, where photocopying and/or printing is required, this should be undertaken by the school, on school premises. In line with OCC policy, the Governance Professional is no longer permitted to use commercial photocopiers.

9. Additional Clerking functions not covered by the standard service

The following functions can be provided at an additional cost where the service has capacity. Please see appendix 1 for full cost details.

- 9.1. **The administration and minuting of additional full governing board meetings and committee meetings;**
 - 9.1.1. Additional meetings will be charged at **£350.00**.
 - 9.1.2. The Clerking of additional meetings must be arranged by mutual agreement between the Governance Professional and the board.
 - 9.1.3. Once agreed the Chair must contact the Clerking Service Team Lead to confirm arrangements and ask the school to add this to the OCC Buyback platform.

10. Clerking for complaints, pupil exclusion, staff grievance/disciplinary hearings

- 10.1. The Chair or Headteacher must contact the Clerking Service Team Lead before the Clerking arrangements are finalised with the Governance Professional.
- 10.2. The level of service for these meetings only includes setting up the meeting, sending out pre-prepared pack (not the collating or checking of the paperwork to be included in the pack), attendance at the meeting to take notes, preparation of the minutes and sending out the decision letter for pupil discipline and parental complaint cases. The expectation is that Education Personnel Services or the board's HR advisor will produce the decision letter for staffing cases.
- 10.3. 10 hours are allocated to these hearings at a cost of **£420.00**, additional hours will be charged at **£45.50** per hour
- 10.4. The invoice will be raised upon receipt of the Governance Professional submitting their work form.

11. Maintained Schools

Oxfordshire County Council has statutory duties in respect of the governance of its maintained schools. To comply with these there is an assumed requirement for us to hold a database of governors contact details. In addition:

—
30 (3) Education Act 2002 The governing body of a maintained school shall provide the local education authority with such reports in connection with the discharge of the functions of the governing body as the authority may require (either on a regular basis or from time to time) for the purposes of the exercise of any of the authority's functions.
—

To enable compliance OCC pays the Online Governance Platform subscription for all its maintained schools and in return we require that maintained schools use the Online Governance Platform to hold the data Boards are legally required to store and allow OCC visibility of it. For maintained schools with an LA Governance Professional this is mandatory and by signing up to this SLA Boards agree to provide OCC with this level of visibility through the Online Governance Platform system.

Contact details

Email: Clerking.Service@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

The Clerking Service, Governor Services
Learning and School Improvement, 4th Floor
County Hall
New Road
Oxford
OX1 1ND

Appendix 1: Costs for additional Clerking Service options 2026/27

Standard Clerking Service

60 hours. 6 full board meetings, membership records, administration, advice/guidance.

£2,694.00

Part 1 (7 months) invoice for £1,571.50 will be raised November 2026:

Part 2 (5 months) invoice for £1,122.50 will be raised June 2027:

Additional Full Board Meetings and Committee Meetings

10 hours. The administration and minuting of meetings.

£350.00

The invoice will be raised upon receipt of the Governance Professional submitting their work form.

Panel Meetings: Complaints, pupil exclusions, staff grievance, disciplinary hearings.

Minimum charge of **£420.00** for the first 10 hours with additional hours charged at **£45.50** per hour. The invoice will be raised upon receipt of the Governance Professional submitting their work form. Please contact Clerking.Service@Oxfordshire.gov.uk with any queries or for any further information and ask the school to add this to the OCC Buyback platform.

Payment terms

Payment terms are: Within 28 days due net.

Failure to make payment within these terms could result in interest charges being incurred.

Refunds

Following the relevant notice period refunds will be made as soon as practicably possible.

Where a board is leaving the service, the refund will be on a pro-rata basis based on the standard service subscription.

Where a refund is due because the Service could not provide the contracted service, it will be made at £30 per hour for the relevant number of hours.

Where a board cancels a meeting or changes the date of a meeting to one that their Governance Professional cannot make and the Service cannot supply a cover Governance Professional, no refund will be made.