

Governing for Assurance

COMPLIANT

INFORMED

PREPARED

AUTUMN TERM
2026
Issue 1
25th September 2026

THIS ISSUE'S FOCUS

Starting the year on the right foot

The essential checks, dates and updates for your board this autumn.

Four things to do now

- | | | | |
|-----------|--|-----------|---|
| 01 | SAFEGUARDING
Read KCSIE and record your compliance on GovernorHub. | 02 | LEADERSHIP
Elect your chair and confirm committee roles. |
| 03 | DIARY
Save the Oxfordshire briefing dates this term. | 04 | ANNUAL SCHEDULE
Check you have covered all the items listed for the autumn term |

And one to watch out for...

GOVERNOR DATA ACCURACY



Please ensure that all governor details are up to date and accurate, including roles and responsibilities.

We will be requesting confirmation of data accuracy from chairs and governance professionals during the second half of the autumn term.

IN THIS ISSUE



NATIONAL UPDATES

Changes to legislation,
guidance and consultations



OXFORDSHIRE UPDATES

Local briefings,
priorities and
support



HINTS, TIPS AND USEFUL DOCUMENTS

NGA resources, GovernorHub
tips and Oxfordshire processes
and templates

Governor Services

Supporting strong, strategic and compliant governance



OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL

National updates

Changes which came into effect on 1st September 2026

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 – gov.uk

WHAT'S CHANGED: KCSIE Part 1 must now be read in full by all staff.

Regulated activity has been redefined; volunteers in regulated activity need an enhanced DBS check with children's barred list information, even when supervised.

New guidance covers gender-questioning children, single-sex facilities, sport, mobile phone-free schools, harmful sexual behaviour, serious violence and AI use.

ACTION: All governors should read and understand the new statutory guidance *in full* and confirm that they have done so on GovernorHub.

Read More: [Keeping children safe in education 2026: September 2026](#)

Supporting documents: [Governing Board Safeguarding Information Sept 2026](#)

Updated Governance Guides (both Maintained Schools and Academies)

WHAT'S CHANGED: The majority of changes are to bring the guides into line with recent updates in legislation and statutory guidance. There are some areas where guidance has been strengthened, expanded or clarified, such as the board's role in pupil and staff wellbeing. The guides have also partially been restructured.

ACTION: Review the relevant guide and note the updates. There is a "What has changed" section detailing the July updates at the start of each guide.

Read More: [Maintained schools: governance guide - GOV.UK](#)

[Academy trusts: governance guide - GOV.UK](#)

Ofsted – updated toolkits for inspections from September 2026

WHAT'S CHANGED: Ofsted has published the first of its annual updates to its toolkits. This blog post summarises what has changed: [What you need to know about the September 2026 updates to education inspections – Ofsted: education](#)

ACTION: Review the updated toolkit and discuss the implications with school leaders. Seek assurance that statutory guidance is reflected in policy and practice, particularly in relation to safeguarding, inclusion, attendance, SEND and support for disadvantaged pupils. If your school is due for inspection within the next year, ensure the governing board understands the updated inspection expectations and can clearly articulate its strategic oversight and impact.

Read More: [School inspection: toolkit, operating guides and information - GOV.UK](#)

[Early years inspection: toolkit, operating guide and information - GOV.UK](#)

Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework updates

WHAT'S CHANGED: New versions of the frameworks took effect from 1 September 2026. The main changes to both versions are updates on safer sleep, a requirement for providers to have regard to screen use, prohibiting childcare where banned dog breeds are present and other safeguarding clarifications.

ACTION: If your school operates a nursery or other EYFS provision, seek assurance that leaders have reviewed the updated framework and implemented the new requirements relating to safer sleep, screen use, volunteer DBS checks and safeguarding procedures.

Read More: [Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework - GOV.UK](#)

National updates

Changes which came into effect on 1st September 2026 cont'd

Allergy Safety in Schools – new guidance

WHAT'S CHANGED: For the first time, the government has produced statutory guidance about the support that pupils with allergies must receive in schools.

ACTION: Ensure that your school has a dedicated allergy safety policy which complies with the new guidance. A named senior leader should be responsible for the policy, which should be reviewed at least annually and published. Ensure that serious incidents or near misses are reported to the governing board

Read More: [Allergy safety in schools - GOV.UK](#)

Mobile Phones in Schools – guidance now statutory

WHAT'S CHANGED: This guidance is now statutory. Schools should begin following it from 1 September 2026.

ACTION: Ensure that the school's behaviour policy prohibits the use of mobile phones and other smart technology with similar functionality throughout the school day, including during lessons, and the time between lessons.

Read More: [Mobile phones in schools - GOV.UK](#)

Supporting documents: [Behaviour in schools - GOV.UK](#)

Cost of School Uniform – updated statutory guidance

WHAT'S CHANGED: Statutory guidance on developing a school uniform policy and managing uniform suppliers to ensure the cost of uniforms is reasonable has been updated to reflect the new legal limit on compulsory branded school uniform items in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026.

ACTION: Review your school uniform policy and ensure that it complies with the new guidance

Read More: [Cost of school uniforms - GOV.UK](#)

Supporting documents: [School uniforms: guidance for schools - GOV.UK](#)

Relationships education, relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education - new statutory guidance

WHAT'S CHANGED: Statutory guidance on relationships education, relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education came into effect on 1 September 2026.

ACTION: Ensure that the relevant policies and curriculum have been brought into line with the new statutory guidance

Read More: [Relationships and sex education \(RSE\) and health education - GOV.UK](#)

National updates

Other recent updates and publications

Free School Meals service changes and checking service

Pupil Premium

WHAT'S CHANGED: From the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year, all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit are entitled to receive a free school meal. A checking service and template documents are available.

ACTION: Ensure that the school is aware of the changes and ask questions around how the school is ensuring that those entitled to pupil premium, particularly with the new universal credit eligibility, are completing the relevant form.

Read More: [Free school meals: guidance for schools and local authorities - GOV.UK](#)

School Security updates, templates and checklists

Health & Safety and Safeguarding

WHAT'S CHANGED: Guidance on school and college security has been updated with additional information on risk assessments, preventative measures and visitors to school premises.

ACTION: Ask school leaders whether the updated school security guidance has been reviewed and whether security, lockdown, evacuation and business continuity plans remain up to date. Seek assurance that arrangements are regularly tested and aligned with safeguarding procedures.

Read More: [School and college security - GOV.UK](#)

Preventing and tackling bullying of school staff

Staff Wellbeing

WHAT'S CHANGED: New guidance has been published which provides clarity for employers on their legal duties to prevent and address intimidation, harassment and bullying of school staff. It sets out the actions schools should take to make sure all staff are supported, respected and protected

ACTION: Governors should ensure that school leaders periodically update the board relating to staff wellbeing and workforce safety

Read More: [Preventing and tackling bullying and harassment of school staff - GOV.UK](#)

School Foods Standards

School food

WHAT'S CHANGED: The government has announced that school food standards will be changing in 2027.

ACTION: It is the statutory responsibility of the governing body and trustees to ensure [school food standards](#) are being met.

Understand the changes and support the school to prepare for the new standard

Read More: [School food standards: guide for governors - GOV.UK](#)

Oxfordshire updates

CONTACT US

GovernorServices@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Briefing dates for the autumn term

Heads and Chairs 1

[Governance Professional Briefing](#)

[Governor Briefing 1](#)

Heads and Chairs 2 (booking link to follow)

Governor Briefing 2 (booking link to follow)

24 Sept

29 Sept

15 Oct

19 Nov

1st Dec

- All briefings are FREE to attend whether your board subscribes to our training package or not.
- Governance Professional Briefings are for all clerks, whether they are part of the LA Clerking Service or not. We would like to encourage non-LA clerks to attend so that they are hearing important updates.

Headteacher Appraisals

Headteacher appraisal is statutory in maintained schools and best practice for academies. Boards should delegate the process to a headteacher appraisal panel of 2 or 3 governors. Eligible governors should receive relevant training; our next training session is **Monday 16 November 2026, 7pm–8.30pm** [Book here](#).

In Oxfordshire maintained schools, appraisals run from 1 September to 31 August and must be completed by 31 December. The panel must be supported by a suitably skilled external adviser, who can be commissioned through Governor Services as part of a Headteacher Appraisal Package. To purchase this package, ask your school to visit [Governor Services|Oxfordshire|Education](#) where they can book the service.

Safeguarding audit deadline

The final submission date for the annual safeguarding audit is **27 November 2026**. Before this date, the report must have been reviewed and approved by the full governing board.

Finance - Budget Deficit update (maintained schools only)

The OCC Finance Team has reviewed the maintained schools 3-year budget submissions for financial year 2026-27 to 2028-29. For the maintained schools requesting a budget deficit during the 3 years, the Finance Team has completed its assessment and categorised the budget deficit requests in terms of any action needed. Headteachers should expect to receive correspondence about their deficit budget submission in the coming weeks. The finance letter will be sent directly to Headteachers and asked to respond accordingly to the requests in the letters. Please contact your Headteacher to share the finance letter with you once they have received it. If you have any questions, please contact the Schools Finance team at: schoolfunding@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Foundation Governor appointment

Oxfordshire Diocesan Board of Education (OBDE) Foundation Governor approval meeting dates this term are **29 September** and **10 November**.

If you wish to appoint or reappoint a foundation governor, you will need to get the appropriate forms completed and sent to the diocese in time for the meetings on these dates. If you have any queries about the process, please contact tracy.makin@oxford.anglican.org

Hints, tips and useful documents



Useful NGA documents for the start of the year

- Governor Code of conduct [Code of conduct in schools | National Governance Association](#)
- [Maintained school delegation planner | National Governance Association](#)
- [Committee terms of reference | National Governance Association](#)
- [Governor Skills Audit | National Governance Association](#)
- An alternative model of governance [The circle model: governing without committees | National Governance Association](#)

GovernorHub hot tip!

Using GovernorHub to record and publish declarations of interests

- For governors:

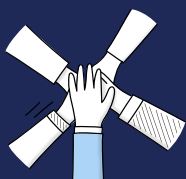
Rather than filling out a form, your GovernorHub profile can be used to record your declarations, and to confirm them each year:

[How do I make declarations of interest and other confirmations? | GovernorHub Help Centre](#)

- For clerks and GovernorHub admins:

If your governors fill out their interests on their profile, GovernorHub will turn them into a report for use on the school's website at the press of a button. Here's where to find it:

[Declarations of interest \(for clerks and admins\) | GovernorHub Help Centre](#)



Oxfordshire documents and templates

- [Procedures for the Election of Chair and Vice Chair of Governors](#)
- [Associate member of the board FAQs](#)
- [Model Standing Orders template 2026-27](#)
- [Governing Board Safeguarding Information Sept 2026](#)
- [Example Governor Monitoring Plan](#)
- [Governor Monitoring Visit Form](#)
- [Declaration of Interests Form](#)
- [Register of Business Interests Template](#)
- And don't forget our [Annual Schedule of Governing Board Business Academic Year 2026-2027](#) to help you stay on track with statutory requirements and best practice