Governing for Assurance

COMPLIANT INFORMED PREPARED

AUTUMN TERM
2026
20th November
Issue 2

THIS ISSUE'S FOCUS

Getting into your stride

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

Four things to do now

01 **HEADTEACHER APPRAISAL**

Complete the appraisal and report to FGB

02 **DEADLINES FOR REPORTS AND RETURNS**

Ensure you are compliant by completing statutory reporting on time

03 **DATA ACCURACY CONFIRMATION**

Make sure GovernorHub is up to date and confirm to Governor Services

04 **ANNUAL SCHEDULE**

Check you have covered all the items listed for the autumn term

And one to watch out for…

SPRING TERM TRAINING

Booking for Spring term training is now open. To see the full programme, follow this link: Governor training | Oxfordshire Schools
All bookings can be made through GovernorHub

In This Issue

NATIONAL UPDATES



Changes to legislation, guidance and consultations

OXFORDSHIRE UPDATES



Local briefings, priorities and support

THIS TERM ON THE ANNUAL SCHEDULE



Highlights for this half term

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

Teachers' Pay and Conditions update 2026/27

WHAT'S CHANGED: The new version of the schools teachers' pay and conditions was published recently. It came into effect from 1st September.
ACTION: Governors should have an awareness of this document. A model OCC teachers' pay policy is in the process of being written and will be uploaded to the Schools website by HR once complete.
Read More: School teachers' pay and conditions - GOV.UK
Supporting documents: HR policies - P | Oxfordshire Schools

Updated mobile phone guidance for schools

WHAT'S CHANGED: Schools should go beyond the 'not seen, not heard' approach and adopt whole school strategies that keep mobile phones out of use and inaccessible throughout the school day. This guidance came into effect on 1st September 2026.
ACTION: Governors should confirm the school's mobile phone arrangements have been reviewed against the statutory guidance and that all policies referencing mobile phones are aligned to this.
Read More: Strengthened guidance to take the next leap to phone-free schools - GOV.UK

Updated Data Protection in Schools

WHAT'S CHANGED: Updated to explain how schools should identify a lawful basis for sharing personal data, when to consider a data protection impact assessment and what records and agreements they may need to keep.
ACTION: For awareness
Read More : Data protection in schools - Guidance - GOV.UK

Consultation seeking views on Children Not in School

WHAT'S CHANGED: The Government is seeking to update the 2019 Elective Home Education guidance for local authorities and parents, to explain how new duties should work in practice.
ACTION: Schools and parents are invited to share their views to inform the final guidance and regulations
Read More: Children Not in School statutory guidance - Department for Education

School Belonging case studies research: summary

WHAT IS THIS: This study identifies the key principles and practical strategies used by 16 case study schools, providing a rich evidence base to inform future guidance for all schools
ACTION: For board information and awareness
Read More: School belonging case studies research: summary - GOV.UK

Oxfordshire Updates

Governor Briefing 2



Our second Governor Briefing of the year will take place on **1st December at 6pm**. This is FREE to attend whether your board subscribes to our training programme or not.
Topics this term will include funding for school repairs and maintenance, an Ofsted update from the Regional Education Partnership team, information on the proposed cluster models and updates from other OCC colleagues. You can **Book here.**



Spring term training programme - booking now open

The Governor Services spring term training programme is now available to view **here** and sessions are also available to book on GovernorHub or by contacting **GovernorTraining@Oxfordshire.gov.uk** .
If you subscribe to our training programme, these sessions are free to attend. If your board does not subscribe, attendance is on a pay as you use basis. More information **here.**

Deadlines

There are several important deadlines to be aware of towards the end of this term.

- **Annual safeguarding report deadline**

The deadline for submission of the annual s157/175 safeguarding audit is 27th November (next Friday). Please ensure that this has been reviewed by your board before submission and that actions have been noted

- **Pupil premium statement and report**



Approved by FGB and on school's website by 31 December

- **Inclusion Strategy**

On school's website by 31 December

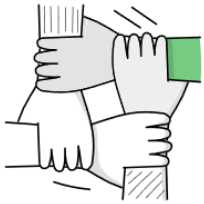
Governor data accuracy



Following your first meeting of the academic year please ensure that all governor details are up to date and accurate on GovernorHub, including roles and responsibilities.
We will be requesting confirmation of data accuracy from chairs and governance professionals over the next two weeks, so do check your own details are accurate to support this process.
GovernorHub is the county council's record of maintained governors in Oxfordshire as well as being the record site for many of our boards, so please keep it up to date and accurate.

Oxfordshire Updates

Oxfordshire's proposed locality clusters



The Local Authority recently held **five engagement sessions** recently to introduce cluster models to governors of maintained and academy schools.

Oxfordshire is developing a **locality cluster approach** within its SEND reform programme to provide earlier, more joined-up support for children and strengthen inclusive practice in mainstream schools. Clusters would bring groups of schools together to identify shared needs, exchange expertise and collaborate with specialist services.

Clusters are expected to be **locality-based and cross-phase**, typically involving around 8–10 schools, maintained and academy. The emerging model could include SENDCo-led collaboration with greater collective involvement in resource decisions. Leadership, funding and investment arrangements remain in development.

A key element, **Experts at Hand**, will bring educational psychology, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and specialist teaching closer to schools. Support could include consultation, training, coaching and coordinated multidisciplinary responses to emerging needs.

For governors, this is strategically important. Boards should understand the cluster approach's aims, how their school will engage with its agreed cluster and seek assurance that collaboration supports inclusion, builds staff capability and improves outcomes for pupils with SEND. Next steps include finalising cluster groupings, developing operational guidance and further district engagement.

If you were not able to attend the earlier engagement meetings, there will be more opportunities to hear about the project and its developments early in the Spring term, dates and venues to be confirmed.

Complaints panels and booking a panel clerk

Research highlights rising volumes of complaints which has placed growing demands on schools and governing boards. DfE guidance expects clear, accessible complaints procedures that address concerns fairly at the appropriate level. If complaints do reach the governor panel stage, quality advice and clear, timely communication can help ensure a fair hearing and a clear, reasoned outcome.

We recommend that you use the DfE guidance on complaint handling, including a model complaints procedure which you can adapt to your circumstances: School complaints procedures: guidance for maintained schools - GOV.UK

If you require OCC Governance Professional (clerking) support with a complaint, please contact the Clerking Service by emailing Clerking.Service@Oxfordshire.gov.uk ***AND*** book your panel meeting support here: Panel Meetings: Complaints, pupil exclusions, staff grievance, disciplinary hearings. | Oxfordshire | Education Services. Your school office will be able to support with this.

The Annual Schedule this term

Autumn considerations

These autumn checks can help your board focus its assurance work.

Board priorities and people

Does everyone on the board know the vision, strategic direction, key risks and priorities? Are committee responsibilities and delegated duties clear? Has the board got the baseline data it needs to measure impact against?

Check which governors' terms end next term. Hold parent and staff elections to fill vacancies and recruit to other unfilled roles.

Email Governor Services now about LA governor terms ending after Christmas.

Governor recruitment

Website and governance records

Do governors know the school website is accurate and compliance with governance information requirements? *Their role is oversight, with others making updates*.

Ensure governance details reach the Secretary of State through GIAS, which school staff usually update.

*GovernorHub users can download a supporting report from the **About** tab.*

Maintained websites / Academy websites / GIAS

School improvement and impact

Have you agreed the SEF and SIP/SDP? Is the improvement plan linked to the budget and have you agreed the governor monitoring needed to show impact?

Don't forget to review Ofsted, FFT (if subscribed), Analyse School Performance and IDSR evidence, pupil progress and attainment, including SEND and pupil premium groups, and external exam results. Check the impact of improvement work and additional funding, including pupil premium, Service pupil premium, PE and sport, and SEND.

Monitoring plan / ICFP / Link governor guidance

Community voice and admissions

Plan how to hear staff, family and pupil views throughout the year and communicate with the community.

Admissions authorities (academies, foundation and voluntary aided schools) should draw up next year's policy. Consult on proposed changes, or every seven years if unchanged.

School admissions code

Appraisal and pay

Check that all teaching staff within scope have been appraised. Receive the teacher appraisal report and adopt the pay policy after publication of the pay and conditions document.

Has the Pay Committee mat to consider the recommendations from the Headteacher (for teachers) and the Appraisal Sub-Group (for the headteacher)?

Pay decisions:

Teachers by 31 October 2026 **Headteacher** by 31 December 2026.

For full details of all the statutory and best practice items for consideration in the autumn term, look at the Annual Schedule of Governing Board Business Academic Year 2026-2027

Hints, Tips and useful documents

Useful NGA documents

Managing policies

Managing the wealth of policies which schools have can be logistically complicated. However, not all policies are statutory, and not all must be approved by the board. Your delegation planner should indicate both the frequency and level of approval for the school's policies. Some can be delegated to committees of the board, others to an individual governor, and the vast majority to the headteacher. The NGA has produced some useful guidance on managing policies.

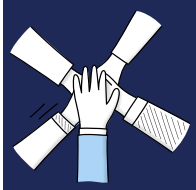
Reviewing policies guidance

Policy review schedule | National Governance Association

GovernorHub hot tip!

School visits

Did you know you can record School Visits on GovernorHub?
All school visits by governors can be recorded in one place. This makes them searchable, and you can upload a visit report to the record of that visit.
What's more, you can share the reports to your noticeboard, or copy them to a folder for inclusion in a governor meeting.
Full details on how to use this facility can be found here



Oxfordshire documents and templates

Annual Schedule of Governing Board Business Academic Year 2026-2027

Filling governor vacancies – ideas of where to look for new governors, and all the processes you will need to get those governors on board can be found here: Governor recruitment | Oxfordshire Schools

Some information to support key monitoring roles:
Governing Board Safeguarding Information Sept 2026
Attendance in Schools - Question Bank