



GOVERNANCE NEWSLETTER.

Autumn 2023

Governance Helpdesk - **01438 544487**

Governance Training - **01438 544478**

Clerking - **01438 544459**



Welcome

Happily, the end of the busy Summer Term is always punctuated and brightened by those special events and occasions that governors can attend and see in action the results of their hard work and enthusiasm. We hope you get the chance to attend a sports day, leavers assembly or summer fete to celebrate the end of the academic year with your school community.

The Governance Team would like to take the opportunity to thank you for volunteering in such an essential role. We are always here to support with advice, guidance and training. To find out more about what we offer, please have a look at our [website](#) or contact governance@hfleducation.org

The Governance team

HFL UPDATES

HAPPY BIRTHDAY HFL!

In June, in the year of our 10th birthday, HFL held its Staff Company Conference at Tewinbury Farm in Welwyn. Our theme was **Making a Difference Together**.

In the morning we took the time to look back at what we have achieved and shared “voices and stories” from schools in Hertfordshire. We have re-branded, grown to 460 members of staff and broadened our offer, but our impact with the schools and settings remains central to our purpose.

In the afternoon, we got into small “cross team” groups and looked at how we could ease some of the problems that schools are currently facing. Our collective ideas have provided many threads for us to examine - in critical areas that schools are telling us are the challenges they face daily



Day 1 for Herts for Learning Ltd in September 2013

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK

In May, HFL focused on **anxiety** as part of the national UK Mental Health Awareness Week.

Anxiety is one of the most common mental health disorders that we face today. A recent survey revealed that female workers are also now more than 54% more likely to suffer from anxiety than male workers. However, unsurprisingly most of us now will be ruminating, dealing with, or supporting others through life challenges, uncertain times or financial pressures, which can naturally weigh heavily on our minds.



Here at HFL our **Mental Health First Aiders** have received training on how to support colleagues with anxiety and other mental health issues, and they kindly produced a variety of resources around this topic for us to share and use both in mental health week and going forward.

SUPPORTING PRIDE MONTH

In June, HFL was proud to support **Pride month**, and this screen saver was a reminder for all staff of our corporate social responsibility agenda. The iconic rainbow flag was created by revered drag queen Gilbert Baker in 1978 and has become the international symbol of LGBTQ+ communities.

We are at our best when we are authentic, feel able to bring our full selves to work, and are respectful to and of our colleagues – feeling energised and enriched by the connectivity we hold with others around us in a community that shares a core purpose.

Pride marks an important symbol freedom of expression, inclusivity and solidarity against prejudice and bias, so during Pride month we shared information on its history and links to wider information and resources.



SUSTAINABILITY LEADS NETWORK

In 2022, the Department for Education (DfE) announced its long awaited sustainability strategy, including the requirements for all schools to have a sustainability lead appointed and action plan in place by 2025.

To support this, HFL Education have launched a brand new Sustainability Leads Network for schools across Hertfordshire and beyond. Its purpose is to support schools, in particular Sustainability Leads, school leaders and governors, to understand the subject and enable them to develop a compelling whole-school sustainability plan.

One of the key principles of the network is no judgment on sustainability knowledge or lifestyle choices, with no question too silly, and no problem too small or too big. It will be a hub for sustainability knowledge, provision of key documents & templates, governance guidance to help the delivery of sustainability strategies and sharing of

best practice from around the country and the globe.

The network meets online twice a term, and we invite guest presenters along to share their insights. So far, we've heard from two schools in Hertfordshire who are doing amazing things, and at our meeting on 13th July, we heard from the Head of Sustainability at Herts County Council, Julie Greaves.

To support schools between meetings, an online community forum has been created to share all things sustainability, such as podcasts, articles, ideas, calls for help and summaries of long publications, particularly from the DfE.

HFL will also be running an Introduction to Sustainability session, specifically for governors, in November. It will be a 60-minute, high level webinar, introducing key terms and how the subject impacts all elements of school activity, with time for questions throughout.

HFL UPDATES

These initiatives are fully funded for all schools, and the sessions are recorded. So sign up for them, and if you can't make the live meetings, then you can always watch the recordings back at your convenience.

Sustainability and thinking of our planet needs to become central to everything we do and every decision we make, so the better we understand the subject, the better we will be at helping planet and communities.

GOVERNOR TRAINING UPDATE – USING THE LIVESTORM ONLINE PLATFORM

As you may be aware, for larger governance training sessions, we use an online platform called LiveStorm. LiveStorm is slightly different to MS Teams in that delegates must **register** with LiveStorm first to receive a joining link - LiveStorm refer to this as an **access link**. This link should be resent to all registered delegates approximately 1 hour before training starts.

After registering, if you do not appear to have received the access link,

please check your junk/spam folders. If the access link is not in those folders, please email gov.courses@hfleducation.org, and we will resend the access link to your registered email address.

For step-by-step instructions, please have a look at [this document](#) in GovernorHub, or contact gov.courses@hfleducation and ask for a copy to be emailed.

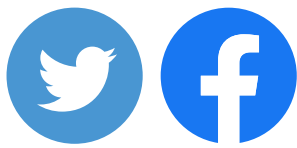
GOVERNANCE BLOGS

Read “**Governors and the disadvantage gap**” [here](#)

[Click here for more Governance blogs](#), and to subscribe straight to your inbox click [here](#).



Closing the gap between the disadvantaged and their more able peers is an ongoing challenge for most schools and one that has been badly impacted by the past few years.



FOLLOW HFL GOVERNANCE ON TWITTER AND FACEBOOK

We are now active on Twitter and Facebook (search HfLGovernance) where we post news, alert you to upcoming events and share content from the wider world of governance and education. This activity does not replace our usual email and Governor Hub communications but is there as a reminder of things you may be interested in and comes direct to your phone.

If you get a moment, please follow us on either Twitter or Facebook (or both!) and like/ share our posts to grow our online community of governors to receive the latest updates from the HFL Governance team.

If you would like any help engaging with our social media alerts or have any suggestions for things you would like to be alerted to or informed about please email: jonathan.ellam@hertsforlearning.co.uk

NEW FROM GOVERNORHUB - DIVERSITY DATA COLLECTION

Although not yet statutory; the DfE are encouraging schools and academy trusts to collect and publish diversity data related to the governing board, trust board and local committees.

What **maintained schools** and **academies** must publish online has been updated to include collecting and publishing governing board diversity data:

“Collecting and publishing governing board diversity data.

Diversity is important and we want governing boards to be increasingly reflective of the communities they serve.

We encourage schools to collect and publish governing board members’ diversity data. Information should be widely accessible to members of the school community and the public. Board members can opt out of sharing their information, including protected characteristics, at any given time including after publication.



GovernorHub

*Schools must ensure that individuals cannot be identified through the publication of data, particularly when board member levels are low. Read more about this in the **data protection toolkit for schools** and **Equality Act 2010: advice for schools**.*

There is no prescriptive way to collect diversity data from volunteers; this needs to be done on a voluntary basis. Schools may prefer to adopt a similar approach to how they collate the diversity data of pupils”.

In order to assist schools and academies comply with the new DfE guidance, GovernorHub have now added a section to the personal profile section of all accounts which governor/trustees have the option to complete.

Please see [here](#) GovernorHub’s Q&As regarding the new feature.

PROMOTING INCLUSION IN SCHOOLS AND REVISING BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

Felicity Evans – Consultant working with Hertfordshire Children's Services.

Over the past decade I have delivered training to many hundreds of Governors, and at the start of each training session, I ask the group to think about the skills that children will need to equip them well in the 21st century.

I am asking you now to take two minutes, a piece of paper and a pen to consider these questions:

What skills will our children need in the 21st century?

How do they acquire them?

I wonder what you have written down?

Most Governors give a range of good answers to that question but what is significant and consistent is that the skills noted are not written on the timetable or in the curriculum offer. They are often skills for life and not academic; communication skills, teamwork, confidence, social skills, being able to adapt, resilience etc.

The Internet has changed everything, and the world of work is changing at a more rapid pace than ever before. Children and young people spend hours on their smartphones, iPads, computers and/or gaming consoles but when they get into school, they are not routinely using the same, 'smart' communication tools that they use at home.

So, a second question....

Do you feel that your school is able to prepare children with the skills they will need in 10- 20 or 30 years' time? If not, what is holding the school back?

The pressures on schools are many and some feel restricting. Schools have the responsibility for preparing young

people for their life ahead and at the same time for the measurement of standardised testing. They must also comply with the rigors of the Ofsted inspection framework. However, our children and young people are also experiencing pressures as never before and what is offered to them at school must help them develop the skills to be able to cope with what life throws at them.

Let us suppose that you and your school had the freedom to re-write the curriculum with the specific aim to prepare the children for their future.

- What would you as a school leader think the curriculum offer should be?
- Would it be different for different children?
- Could it be that flexible?
- Should it and could it be personalised for each and every child?

This is not such a radical suggestion when we consider that the current one-size-fits-all curriculum approach to learning and teaching does not marry up with the fact that children are not all one size, and nothing fits them all!

Having said that, there are many things that all children do need and deserve in their school learning offer and this has as much to do with **'how'** children learn as **'what'** children learn. It is the Bananarama Theory – 'It is not what you do, but the way that you do it...that is what gets results.

Children and young people, especially now after the disruption of Covid, need and deserve;

- An environment that offers relationships that are safe and secure, built on trust, connection, understanding and care.

DFE, HCC AND OTHER NATIONAL UPDATES

- Facilitated access to learning that is socially inclusive and develops skills in the individual.
- A shared understanding of expectations and established processes for resolving difficulties when they arise.

Does your school offer this to each and every child?

We know that following the pandemic, a great deal has changed for our children, our schools and for families.

Schools may have returned to full time education, but the impact of the pandemic continues, and we remain in the 'recovery phase'. More children and young people are presenting with anxiety and distress. For them, the routine and structure of school and learning is proving challenging to re-establish.

Hertfordshire schools are working very hard with compassion and care for children, young people, families and carers, to help children experiencing distress in school. This is best practice and should be shared between schools to help develop successful relational practice in their schools and communities.

In 2023, a steering group of experienced Head Teachers alongside representatives from Hertfordshire Children's Services started to think about shaping the culture and ethos of the school system in a different way. The focus is firmly on the wellbeing of children and young people, school staff and the local community. It is based on positive relationships with a shared vision to achieve better outcomes for each and every child.

Schools and authorities across the world are wrestling with how they can reshape the culture and ethos of schools in our post-pandemic world recognising the impact on children and families' wellbeing.

We know we need to '*Reflect, Rethink and Reset practice to achieve better outcomes for each and every child*'.

It is important that any approach at this time must be for **all children**. 'Each and Every Child' includes those with special or additional needs. The Government's ambitious 'Green Paper: SEN Review - Right Support, Right Place, Right Time' has been written to ensure every child with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) gets the high-quality support that meets their needs. Enhancing the skills of all staff in meeting the learning needs of all children and young people are central to the success of the proposals set out in the Green Paper.

There are a range of helpful strategies already in Hertfordshire, such as Early Help, Families First, the SEND strategy and Services for Young People which aim to help all those, including schools supporting families, to better meet their needs. A collective response will be necessary to achieve the ambitious vision for every child.

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk> or <https://thegrid.org.uk>

and search for

- **HCC Emotional Well-being and Behaviour Strategy**
- **SEND Strategy 2022-25**
- **Families First and Early Help**
- **Hertfordshire County Council Services for Young People**

Rethinking how we work in schools will also be important and school leaders will be encouraged to review school policy and practice. For example, rethinking and resetting the in-school approaches to behaviour management will require us to be mindful of the language we use and will take account of the underlying causes of distressed behaviour and interrupted attendance for some children and young people.

DFE, HCC AND OTHER NATIONAL UPDATES

Schools cannot be expected to carry all the responsibility. Children's Services in Hertfordshire are committed to working in partnership to secure the best possible outcomes for children and their families. We know that investment in staff will make the biggest difference to children and their families – making professional development for school staff and school leaders essential. A very strong professional development offer that has been curated for all schools to access during 2023-24, at a very affordable cost, will be launched next term. Governors should familiarise themselves with this and more information will be available for Governors at briefings and in updates next term.

Schools will need to consider their own context for professional development. For example, the offer from When the Adults Change, <https://www.relationshipsinhertfordshirematter.com>

can be tailored to individual school needs and where they are on their improvement journey. HFL are also offering a behaviour leadership course starting in January 2024 which includes a range of very well-known educational speakers. The learning offer approach will support and guide schools, enabling and empowering them to embed a strong culture of inclusive and relational practice within their school community.

The key priorities for school leaders are:

1. All staff to have access to high quality professional learning, feel supported in their role and to be kind.
2. A flexible curriculum offer that meets the needs of each and every child.
3. All children and young people, and their families, feel respected in and valued by their school community and that they belong.

4. An ethos and working practices that are focused on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education that promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The vision for all schools and every governor and trustee is that we must reflect, re-think and reset what we know to be important for children in school now and in their future so that we can secure better outcomes for each and every child in Hertfordshire.

References:

Reinventing Australian Schools for the better wellbeing, health and learning of every child (also discussing principles that apply everywhere):

https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ccchdev/2305_Reinventing-schools_Discussion-Paper.pdf

UNESCO Blue Dot: Rethinking Learning- about alternative pedagogies:

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000372396>

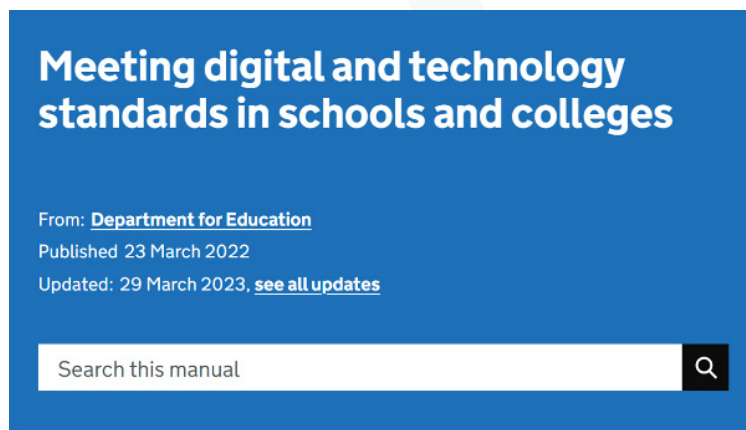
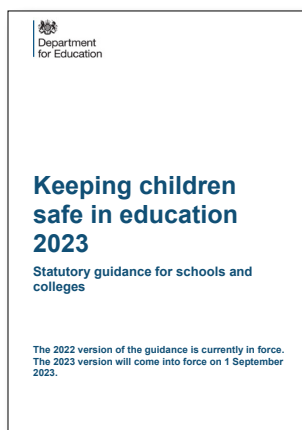


SAFEGUARDING UPDATES

Why not get a head start for the Autumn term by making sure you are aware of the updates to Keeping Children Safe in Education that come into force in September 2023, and what standards your school or college should meet on filtering and monitoring.



Department
for Education



 *click each image to go to full guidance*

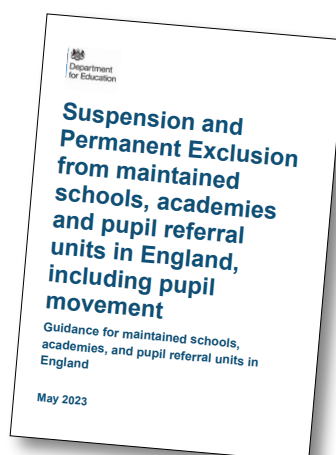
EXCLUSIONS GUIDANCE UPDATE

Updated DfE suspensions and exclusions guidance comes into effect from 1st September 2023. The current edition must be used until then. Key changes include:

- Parents/carers can request the meetings to be held remotely.
- The headteacher must inform parent/carers of their right to make a request for a remote meeting when notifying them of the exclusion.
- Hearings can also be held remotely when there is an extraordinary event or unforeseen circumstance. For example, disease outbreak, extreme weather event.
- Headteachers can now cancel exclusions that have not yet started.

- When the governing board is considering whether to reinstate a pupil, the clerk should be present to take a record of the discussion and how the decision was reached.

A full list of all updates can be found in part 2 of the document.



UPDATES AND USEFUL INFORMATION

HM Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman has responded to recent calls to reform school inspections in the following article **HMCI commentary: improving how we work - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)** which lays out the following changes to inspections.

- a consultation on the complaints process
- changes to how Ofsted inspects safeguarding
- clarity around confidentiality policies
- support for schools between inspections

If you have not had an inspection recently, is there any way of knowing when it will be?

Normally:

- A school judged outstanding or good will be inspected within the 4 academic years following its last inspection.
- A school judged requires improvement or inadequate will be inspected within two and a half years.

Have a look at this Ofsted blog from June 2023 for more details **When will my school be inspected? - Ofsted: schools and further education & skills (FES) (blog.gov.uk)**

How will the inspector prepare for an inspection?

In addition to the information requested from the school, inspectors will review and consider all relevant information held by Ofsted, including:

- data from the inspection data summary report (IDSR) – updates June 2023
- inspection reports on the school
- qualifying complaints
- replies to the student, parent and staff questionnaires

- relevant publicly available information, such as the school's website
- information published by the local authority or the DfE (including RSC)

How are governors involved in inspections?

"We will encourage the school to invite as many governors or trustees as possible to meet inspectors during an inspection. These meetings may include a virtual option using video or telephone calls if necessary. In academies, we expect to meet those directly responsible for management and governance, including the CEO or their delegate (or equivalent), the chair of the board of trustees and other trustees. Inspectors will refer to schemes of delegation when deciding who to speak to." **School Inspection Handbook July 2022 paras 17-19**

What will the inspector be looking for?

"Do leaders and those responsible for governance all understand their respective roles and perform these in a way that enhances the effectiveness of the school?"

In addition, those with governance/oversight are responsible for ensuring that the school fulfils its statutory duties, for example under the Equality Act 2010, and other duties, for example in relation to the 'Prevent' duty and safeguarding. Governors are also expected to exercise strategic oversight of all aspects of safeguarding. When inspectors consider whether governors are fulfilling this responsibility, they are not expected to construct or review a list of duties." **School Inspection Handbook July 2022 paras 320-338**

DFE, HCC AND OTHER NATIONAL UPDATES

The discussion with governors/trustees will usually last 30-40 minutes. The inspector is looking for evidence that governance is making a difference. Demonstrate that all governors/trustees are fully engaged. Avoid ill-judged comments and “off the cuff” remarks. Gather your thoughts before speaking.

What might inspectors ask governors and trustees?

- How do you ensure that the core functions of governance are carried out?
- What is your strategic vision for the school?
- How do you hold executive leaders to account?
- How do you ensure that this school complies with its statutory duties?
- How do you ensure that the right things happen?
- What processes do you have in place to know what is working well in the school?

What documents will the inspector ask to look at?

By 8am on the day of the inspection, schools must provide inspectors with minutes of governing body/trustee board meetings. Inspectors will review these documents to look at how governors/trustees fulfil their core functions and statutory duties.

You will usually be asked for the minutes from the last 3 meetings and can either upload these to the Ofsted Portal, access them with the inspector on GovernorHub, or provide hard copies. Presenting supporting documents e.g., headteachers reports, will provide useful context for the questions that have been recorded in minutes. Governors should take responsibility for how information is reported to them.

NB no documents need to be re-formatted or re-typed etc. Providing the documents should not involve additional workload for school staff.

What should governance documents contain?

- Evidence of challenge
 - Do governors/trustees take the school leaders' word for everything?
 - Do governors/trustees appear to have the right information?
 - Who decides what information governors/trustees will receive?
 - Do all governors/trustees appear to contribute? (Does everyone appear to have read pre-circulated documentation?)
- Things moving on as a result of governors/trustees' questions (i.e., governance making a difference)
- A strategic and systematic approach
- Coherence

Where can I find more information?

Ofsted webinars **Ofsted webinars for schools** (smartsurvey.co.uk)

Ofsted YouTube Channel [Ofstednews - YouTube](#)

Ofsted blog <https://educationinspection.blog.gov.uk/>

Ofsted Talks podcasts <https://ofstedtalks.podbean.com/>

School Inspection Handbook
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-eif/school-inspection-handbook#introduction>

Governance Handbook

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/925104/Governance_Handbook_FINAL.pdf

HERTFORDSHIRE SCHOOL COMPLAINTS ADVISORY SERVICE

HCC offers a service to Herts Schools and Academies which is available Monday to Thursday, 9.00am to 5.00pm and Friday, 9.00am to 4.30pm.

The benefits for schools include:

- schools will be able to ensure compliance with their complaints process.
- schools will receive expert and impartial specialist advice and support.
- the service can be used to gain information about any changes in complaints legislation that may affect the handling of school-based complaints.
- advice will be provided by a trained professional with experience in dealing with school-based complaints.
- the service is open to all types of state-funded school to purchase.
- the service is highly cost effective when compared with the costs associated with compensation payments for complex or protracted cases.
- optional Complaints Training for each school's Designated Complaints Lead is offered annually should a school's purchased time allocation for that academic year not be fully utilised.
- optional review of the school's complaints policy to ensure compliance with current legislation should the school's purchased time allocation for that academic year not be fully utilised.

The infographic is a green rectangular box with white text. At the top, it says 'Hertfordshire School Complaints Advisory Service' with a small Hertfordshire logo. Below this, it states 'This service has been developed following feedback from Head Teachers.' A section titled 'What does the service offer?' lists several bullet points: compliance with legislation, expert specialist advice, support for draft responses, training sessions for 2022/23, quarterly complaints surgeries, confidential discussions, and policy reviews. Another section titled 'Feedback from training for subscribing schools:' features two large percentages: '100%' and '98%'. The 100% is accompanied by the text 'Stated the contents of the training gave relevant and useful ideas to manage future complaints regarding their school'. The 98% is accompanied by 'Stated they would recommend individuals working within schools to attend this training'. Below these are three quotes from headteachers in speech bubble boxes, praising the service's knowledge, helpfulness, and support. At the bottom, the contact information 'Contact: hscas@hertfordshire.gov.uk' is provided.

Hertfordshire School Complaints Advisory Service
This service has been developed following feedback from Head Teachers.

What does the service offer?

- Compliance with relevant legislation
- Schools will receive expert specialist advice and support at every stage of the complaints process
- Support available to review draft responses
- Dedicated training sessions for 2022/23 for individuals working within school complaints
- Quarterly Complaints Surgeries; available by prior appointment, allows for a confidential and impartial discussion of a complaint to determine the best way to respond
- Complaint policy reviews available upon request
- Peace of mind and valuable support to Head Teachers

Feedback from training for subscribing schools:

100% Stated the contents of the training gave relevant and useful ideas to manage future complaints regarding their school

98% Stated they would recommend individuals working within schools to attend this training

"Very knowledgeable presentation, gives me confidence that any complaints will be dealt with efficiently and effectively and the guidance for schools is clear and robust. Thank you." - Headteacher

"Thank you! Very helpful, good to have a point of contact for future support..." - Headteacher

"Thank you... it's good to know you are hearing us and supporting us." - Headteacher

Contact: hscas@hertfordshire.gov.uk

- The Complaints Team also has access to HCC's Legal Department which can advise on specific legal matters arising from complaints (separate charges may apply).

For more information please go to the School Based Complaints area on the Herts GRID **School-based complaints - Hertfordshire Grid for Learning** (thegrid.org.uk)

To check if you school already subscribes, contact governance@hfleducation.org

HERTFORDSHIRE SCHOOL WINS TES PRIMARY SCHOOL OF THE YEAR

Dubbed the 'Oscars of Education', the Tes Schools Awards, is now in its landmark 15th year and celebrates the extraordinary commitment, quality and innovation shown by teachers and support staff across the UK. The awards ceremony took place on Friday 23rd June at the Grosvenor House Hotel, on London's Park Lane.

The 2023 Tes Schools Awards brought together the best teachers and schools from UK state and independent settings, including early years, primary schools and secondary schools and the whole community at Peartree Spring Primary School in Stevenage were thrilled to receive the Primary School of the Year award.

Tes Schools Awards | Winners

Staff at Peartree Spring Primary School think it's a school like no other – and local families appear to agree. The reputation of the three-form entry, 600-pupil school has built to a point where there are more than 250 applications for 90 reception places.

The school provides the very best encouragement and support for children and their families; there is a higher-than-average number of children in receipt of free school meals, SEND and Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) and the school sets high aspirations for all children. High quality learning environments underline those high aspirations, featuring excellent displays, access to two libraries and classroom libraries. Children have a wide range of opportunities for pupil leadership including the school council and eco team, and playground buddy and sports ambassador roles.

Staff, pupils and leaders worked together to identify learning values to support the needs of the children,

including resilience, persistence, self-motivation and risk-taking. Teachers constantly refer to these values during lessons and whole-school assemblies, with the belief that instilling these values will help the children to be successful in every aspect of their lives, today and in the future.

Judge Alison Peacock said: "This school really demonstrated how both children and staff are encouraged to thrive. The work they're doing around mental health and wellbeing throughout the school is impressive."

Please see [Peartree Spring's full submission for the award](#)

Peartree Spring primary school subscribes to a range of HFL Governance Services including Governor Training.

"The Governance Training offered by HFL Education provides a wide range of training subject matter which supports our Governors within their role and the schools Ofsted outcomes.

The Modern Governor e-learning provides easily accessible training supporting our governor knowledge stay focused and updated."



DFE, HCC AND OTHER NATIONAL UPDATES

THE HERTFORDSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL GOVERNORS



Sadly, the HASG will close its doors as of 31st July 2023. You may have noticed from the HFL contracts received in schools' recently that the annual subscription to the HASG is no longer an option. Any funds that have been collected in the past will be ringfenced by HFL and used to provide funding for further governor events.

The committee would like to thank all of those who have supported them over the years.

HASG Outstanding Governor Award winners 2023. Left to right, Peter Falconbridge, St Catherine's Hoddesdon CofE Primary School; Josie Nicholson, Kimpton Primary School; Russell Matcham, Haileybury Turnford; Joanna Lawson, Barnwell School; Rachel Stringer, St Michael's Woolmer Green CofE VA Primary School; Diane Croston, Greenfields & Hurst Drive Federation

