

HERTFORDSHIRE GOVERNANCE NEWSLETTER.

Governance Helpdesk - **01438 544487**
Governance Training - **01438 544478**
Clerking - **01438 544459**

WELCOME

Dear Governors

Welcome to the Autumn Term Newsletter

As we look ahead to the Autumn term, we reflect on what has been a productive and inspiring term for governance across Hertfordshire. It was particularly encouraging to see such strong engagement at this year’s Governors and Trustees Conference, where close to 200 governors came together to hear directly from Ofsted about the emerging framework, alongside an insightful session from Chris Carter and Fiona Tobin on the growing role of artificial intelligence in schools. The level of discussion and interest highlighted the commitment of governors to staying informed and forward-thinking.

This momentum continued through our programme of briefings, with a well-attended and highly valued session focusing on Children Looked After, as well as the ever popular Governance Leadership briefing. These have helped to deepen understanding and support governing boards in navigating some of the most important and rapidly evolving issues facing education today.

We were also pleased to introduce a new one-hour day-time session on curriculum, designed to provide focused, accessible opportunities for governors to strengthen their oversight and understanding of curriculum intent and impact. Early feedback suggests this format has been both practical and effective.

As the academic year draws to a close, we would like to extend our sincere thanks for your ongoing hard work, dedication, and commitment to your schools and communities. Governance is a demanding role, and your contribution continues to make a real difference.

We hope you enjoy a well-earned rest over the summer break and look forward to working alongside you again in the new academic year, as HFL Governance continues to support you in your vital role.

If your school would like to share something that you are proud of please contact governance@hfleducation.org

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HFL UPDATES

GOVERNOR TRAINING

Following the successful launch of our Monitoring and Evaluating Your School Development Plan (SDP) training session, we are pleased to offer an additional session on Tuesday 13th October 2026, from 12:00–1:00pm. This session will be recorded, so we encourage anyone unable to attend the live session to register and access the recording afterwards.

From autumn term 2026, to provide greater flexibility, we will be recording selected courses. This will allow you to access training at a time that suits you should you be unable to attend the live training session. Courses include:

Health & Safety

Role of Safeguarding Link Governor

Exclusions

Governor Induction – Maintained Schools

Governor Induction – Academies

Effective Governance

Governor Visits

We are also busy arranging topical briefings for the autumn term, so please keep an eye out for further information and booking details over the coming weeks.

HFL GOVERNOR AND TRUSTEE CONFERENCE 2026



This year's Governor and Trustee Conference, "Governing for Tomorrow" brought together around 185 governors from across Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire for a highly engaging and thought-provoking two-hour event. The strong attendance showed the continued commitment of governors to developing their knowledge and shaping the future direction of education in an increasingly complex and fast-moving landscape.

The conference programme offered a blend of expert insight and practical reflection, with plenty of opportunity for governors to engage directly with speakers through questions and discussion. A key highlight was the session from Rakesh Patel, Senior HMI at Ofsted, who introduced the renewed approach to the Education Inspection Framework. His focus on leadership and governance provided valuable clarity and reinforced the vital role governing boards play in driving school improvement and ensuring accountability.

Equally inspiring was the session led by HFL's Chris Carter and Fiona Tobin, "Keeping Learning Human: Agency Matters." Their thought-provoking exploration of the balance between innovation and the human aspects of education resonated strongly with attendees, particularly as schools continue to navigate advances in technology while maintaining a clear focus on pupil wellbeing.

The conference also provided an opportunity to hear from HFL's CEO, Carole Bennett, and the People and Organisational Development Director, Dave Windridge who shared insights into the wider strategic direction and the importance of strong organisational culture in supporting educational success.

As always, the event included opportunities for lighter engagement and networking. Congratulations go to Chorleywood Primary School, Chater Infant School, Holdbrook Primary School and St Ippolyts CE Aided Primary School, whose governors were delighted winners of the conference quiz, each receiving a book voucher for their schools.

Overall, the conference was a great success—informative, stimulating and highly relevant. It provided governors and trustees with valuable insights, practical takeaways and renewed confidence in their role as they continue to govern for tomorrow.

What did governors say?

"Excellent session all round. The section on AI was very interesting and thought provoking. The OFSTED session was fantastic" Stevenage school governor

"Ofsted presentation very helpful and AI presentation - very thought provoking"
Hitchin school governor

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Any queries or questions email us at:
support@moderngovernor.com



GETTING HELP WITH SCHOOL COMPLAINTS

HFL COMPLAINTS TOOLKIT PROCESS – for maintained schools

From April 2026, all Herts maintained schools are entitled to access and use the HFL Complaints Toolkit resources as a funded core contract benefit from HCC.

Please take time to read the following to help ensure all school staff and governors feel confident in understanding their responsibilities when responding to a concern or school-based complaint and on the support available through the HFL.

Is it a concern or a complaint?

- Concerns should be addressed promptly at an operational level by school staff, not governors. Early resolution of concerns helps to prevent escalation into formal complaints.
- If the matter is a complaint, please refer to your current school Complaints Policy and the associated process and resources. Eg the HFL toolkit.

Understand the stages

- Be clear about who is responsible for responding or taking action at each stage.
- Understand when a complaint becomes formal and when a panel hearing is required.
- Please remember do not share details of a complaint with the full governing board, as this may compromise impartiality if a Stage 2 panel becomes required.

Checking whether the complaint qualifies?

- Before progressing, confirm whether the issue qualifies as a formal complaint under your policy. For example, certain matters (such as challenges relating to pupil suspension or exclusion) are dealt with under separate statutory procedures.
- If the matter does not qualify, signpost the individual to the appropriate policy or process.

Following the process and timelines

The policy sets out clear timelines for each stage. It is important to adhere to these wherever possible. If additional time is needed:

Stage 1: The school must notify the complainant in writing, providing the reasons for the delay and a revised timeframe.

Stage 2: The Chair of Governors or Chair of the Panel must inform both the complainant and the respondent, including the reasons and a revised timeframe.



Policy compliance

Please ensure your Complaints Policy is up-to-date, followed precisely and avoid deviating from the published procedure.

Preparation before seeking advice

Familiarity with your own school's Complaints Policy and procedures is essential before contacting the HFL Governance helpdesk for support or guidance.

Staff & Governor training

Provide regular training to all staff, and familiarise governors, to help them understand how early actions can de-escalate concerns and the importance of informing SLT promptly, and reviewing periodically where any trends or themes are emerging that have been raised as concerns or complaints. (The HFL Education Governance team can provide this training on a traded basis.)

Governor awareness

- Governors should understand the need for impartiality and avoid involvement in discussion that may constitute or influence a complaint.
- Always direct individuals to your published Complaints Policy.

Attempts to bypass Stage 1

If a complainant contacts the Chair of Governors or another governor directly at the outset, redirect the matter to the Headteacher for Stage 1 consideration. Inform the complainant of this action and provide a copy of the published policy.

Note: If the complaint concerns the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors would be the appropriate individual to lead the Stage 1 process.

Supporting parents/carers

Reduce the risk of complaints being raised incorrectly by ensuring the Complaints Policy is clearly published on the school website, including a clear "What to do if you have a concern" statement and encouraging use of other supportive communication processes e.g. Home/School agreements.

Managing governor contact information

To minimise the risk of complainants contacting governors directly, avoid publishing individual governor email addresses on the school website.

Right to escalate

Where an issue qualifies as a formal complaint, the complainant must be allowed to escalate through all stages of the procedure if they request this.

For example, in a scenario where a Headteacher investigates and upholds a complaint at Stage 1 the complainant still has the right to consider and request escalation to Stage 2, in line with DfE expectations.

Toolkit access

Headteachers have been provided with a link to access the HFL Complaints toolkit which they can share with anyone who needs access in order to deal with a complaint. If you have issues with accessing the toolkit, please contact governance@hfleducation.org

Academies/Multi Academy Trusts can purchase the HFL Complaints Toolkit.

For details, please contact schoolbasedcomplaints@hfleducation.org

If your school subscribes to the [Hertfordshire School Complaints Advisory Service](#), you can access the following support through the service.

- Compliance with relevant legislation.
- Schools will receive expert specialist advice and support at every stage of the complaints process on how best to respond to individual complaints and avoid unnecessary escalation.

- Advice and support to diffuse vexatious and angry complainants.
- Sounding board to headteacher to discuss complex issues.
- Support available to review draft responses.
- Dedicated training sessions for individuals working within school complaint.
- Quarterly Complaints Surgeries; available by prior appointment, allows for a confidential and impartial discussion of a complaint to determine best way to respond.
- Complaint policy reviews available upon request.
- Peace of mind and valuable support to headteachers.

HFL GOVERNANCE SOCIAL MEDIA



The Governance team is now active on LinkedIn; this will be the focus of our social media activity going forward.

Please search for and follow the **HFL Governance** account for updates on training, events, briefings and other team news.

Also search for and follow **Modern Governor** on LinkedIn.

BLOGS



What can boards do to improve the equality within their schools and trusts?

Click here to read the latest Governance blog **“Putting equality at the heart of school & trust governance”**.

[Blog | HFL Education](#)

GovernorHub New Feature: Assigning Training

What's the aim?

This feature enables the clerk or any admin on your board/within your Trust, to assign specific training courses to particular people:

- ensure 'must do' training messages are received loud and clear
- see who's done what you asked and who needs reminding at a glance
- demonstrate commitment to developing board skills by planning training across your team for the year ahead

Read the article below for instructions and screen shots.

<https://help.governorhub.com/en/articles/15281411-training-assign-training-feature>

TERM TIMES ISSUE 7 IS OUT NOW

TERM TIMES

BIG NEWS IN A SMALL BOOK

ISSUE 8 OUT NOW!

Take a look and subscribe to receive the next issue direct to your inbox.



Sign up to the next edition in your inbox.

PRIMARY AND NURSERY HEADTEACHERS' CONFERENCE 2026.

Inclusive leadership: Getting the best out of everyone

A celebration of leadership that places people, purpose and possibility at its heart.

 Thursday 8th & Friday 9th October 2026
Hinnton Hall Conference Centre, Cambridgeshire

Conference tickets starting from £125!



HERTFORDSHIRE UPDATE

SEND UPDATE

A warm hello and an invitation to shape how we work together from the new Director of Inclusion & Skills (Sent previously to all governors on Monday 27th April 2026).



I hope the term has started positively after the Easter break. Before anything else, I want to thank everyone who contributed to the SEND reform design workshop on 17th April.

It was an engaging, thoughtful and genuinely inspiring day. While we all recognise there is still more to do, the openness of discussion and the quality of ideas shared really reflected both the strengths within our system and a shared commitment to improvement.

I'm writing to introduce myself as I step into the role of Director of Inclusion & Skills. I'm very mindful that strong foundations have been built over time through collaboration across schools, settings and partners — and I feel privileged to be building on this work. At the same time, I'm clear-eyed that there remain real challenges and areas where we need to go further.

As we move into the next phase of both local and national reform, it feels important that we continue to approach this work together. Improvement is a shared responsibility, and progress will depend on our collective effort, honest and respectful conversations, and a focus on what will make the greatest difference. I can't promise quick fixes or miracles, but I can commit to working with you openly and pragmatically to make steady, meaningful progress where it matters most for children and young people.

Over the coming months, I'd like to explore how we communicate and connect in ways that genuinely support your work, keeping things clear, purposeful and proportionate. To help me do that, I'd really value your views on how you prefer to receive information, share feedback and stay connected with the Inclusion & Skills directorate.

Please take a few minutes to complete this very short (four question) survey: Shaping how we work together – Fill in form.

Thank you again for everything you continue to do for children, young people and their families. I really look forward to meeting many of you in the coming weeks and months and working closely together as we build on what's in place and focus our shared effort on the areas that need to improve further.

Best wishes
Sam

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SPOTLIGHT ON..... THE IMPORTANCE OF GOVERNORS ATTENDING EXTERNAL VISITS

A concise guide for Hertfordshire school governors

External adviser visits (e.g. School Improvement Partners or School Effectiveness Advisers) provide valuable, independent insight into a school's performance, and enable effective challenge in areas predominately identified as a priority within a school improvement/development plan, or a focus area agreed in advance. Such visits enable the Adviser to undertake a range of opportunities including meeting with SLT, Subject Leaders, Teachers, carry out learning walks, lesson observations, and pupil voice.

The full report, or summary details of such visits are key for governors to support their strategic role, and an update should be provided at the full governing board meeting, or committee if delegated, to keep governors abreast of how work towards the school's priorities are going, what evidence is seen, what impact is the work having, which leads governors into their challenge and support function.

A governor(s) attending the feedback meeting, or the whole session (which the Headteacher should decide), is extremely useful:

1. Hear Feedback First-Hand

By attending, governors hear the adviser's findings directly rather than relying on second-hand summaries. This ensures:

- Greater **accuracy and clarity**
- A shared understanding with school leaders
- Reduced risk of information being lost or misinterpreted

2. Gain an objective understanding of the school

External advisers offer an independent, professional view. Being present allows governors to:

- See the school's **strengths and areas for development** clearly
- Understand how the school compares to wider expectations
- Benefit from an **impartial perspective**

3. Strengthen challenge, accountability and improvement

Governor attendance equips boards to fulfil their core role more effectively. Governors are better able to:

- Ask **informed questions** and challenge leaders appropriately
- Hold leaders to account using **external evidence**
- Support school improvement with confidence

Their involvement also demonstrates that accountability is **robust and taken seriously**.

4. Monitor Key Priorities and Progress

External visits often focus on specific priorities or concerns. Governors can use them to:

- Check progress against the **School Improvement Plan**
- Ensure agreed actions are being implemented
- Evaluate whether changes are having impact

This helps keep improvement work focused and evidence-based.

5. Show Engagement and Build Governor Expertise

A governor presence signals that governance is **active, visible, and engaged** in the school's development. It also provides a valuable learning opportunity:

- Governors see what **good practice** looks like
- Gain insight into **external expectations**
- Build confidence in their role
- Endorses the partnership relationship between governors and SLT

In Summary

Attending external adviser visits enables governors to be better informed, more effective in their challenge, and more confident in supporting school improvement—strengthening governance for the benefit of the whole school community.

Next steps.

- If not known, ask your Headteacher if dates have been agreed for 2026/27 and consider opportunities for shared governor representation in advance.
- Support the Head with feedback when reported at the next meeting – e.g. What did you get out of the visit/feedback meeting; share the positive updates and acknowledge the work put in by staff to embed actions; recognise the work still to do and consider if governor strategic engagement is needed.

KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN EDUCATION (KCSIE) UPDATED FOR 2026/27

The Department for Education (DfE) has published Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) for the 2026/27 academic year. The guidance comes into force on 1st September 2026.

For an outline of the changes please have a look at [this article](#) on GovernorHub.

NEW DfE EXCLUSIONS GUIDANCE

The DfE has updated the suspension and permanent exclusions guidance with effect from 26th July 2026.

See the full guidance here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-suspensions-and-permanent-exclusions>

Updates include clarifications on existing practice as well as:

- removals for safeguarding reasons
 - a crackdown on off-rolling
 - applying off-site direction and managed move laws to academies and PRUs
 - how governing boards should use suspensions and exclusions data to hold leaders to account
 - **GovernorHub Knowledge** has created a need-to-know article on the updated guidance
 - **IQM summary of changes/grid**
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NATIONAL EDUCATION NATURE PARK RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

The National Education Nature Park supports the development of **Climate Action Plans** in education settings across England as part of the **Department for Education's Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy**. They work alongside their 'sister' projects: **Climate Ambassadors**, **Sustainability Support for Education** and **Climate Action Advisors**.

Find out more about the National Education Nature Park and register your school [here](#).

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