

HERTFORDSHIRE GOVERNANCE NEWSLETTER.

Governance Helpdesk - **01438 544487**

Governance Training - **01438 544478**

Clerking - **01438 544459**

WELCOME

The summer holidays are now upon us and we would like to thank every one of you for your hard work and resilience over the last school year which has been a challenging one for many schools. Please find the time to take a break and re-charge over the school holiday and come back refreshed and ready for whatever the new academic year has in store for us.

The Governance Team are excited to announce that this year we will be re-introducing our very popular face-to-face Governors' Conference at Robertson House on **Saturday 16th November 2024**, so please save the date. Further details of keynote speakers and arrangements for the day will be published on GovernorHub very soon – we look forward to seeing some of you there!

The Governance team

Please have a look at our [website](#) or contact governance@hfleducation.org

HFL UPDATES

HFL COMPLAINTS INVESTIGATIONS & RESOURCES - NEW SERVICE

HFL is owned by schools to provide a service back to schools. Increasingly, you are telling us that the level and complexity of complaints is a real challenge and that support in this area is needed. Working alongside schools on real cases, we have developed a new service led by Paul Davies. The service is designed to be flexible and adaptable to needs, wrapping around schools to share the load. The new service is up and running and offers the following:



Complaint Plans

Helping schools and settings to establish whether a complaint can be accepted or not, breaking it down into more manageable parts, and identifying how to actually investigate the complaint, including deciding who to interview as part of the investigation and what policies and procedures are relevant to the situation.

Independent Investigations

Can be requested where a situation has reached a stalemate and an external view is needed. The Independent Investigator will offer to meet with both the Complainant and the Respondent on behalf of the school and they will request access to all of the documentation relevant to the complaint. They will then produce a report setting out their findings and any recommendations arising for the commissioning school to consider in accordance with its complaints process.

Process Reviews

Review by a complaints professional who will check that the school's complaints process complies with the relevant legislation and statutory guidance. They will also provide feedback and make suggestions, for example on how the policy could be improved further or made clearer.

Complaint Reviews

When a complaint has been investigated by a member of school staff or a governor, a Complaint Review involves checking that the school's complaints policy and procedure has been followed and that the investigation has addressed the issues at the heart of the complaint. If it hasn't, support and guidance is given to ensure that the investigation is completed to the required standard. Assistance is also given with the complaint response if this has not yet been completed.

Process Flowcharts

Drawn up by a complaints professional to map out the key points and actions within each stage of the complaints process so that essential information is available at a glance.

Panel Preparation

Meeting with school staff and governors to help them get ready for a panel hearing of a complaint at the second formal stage of the school's complaints process. This involves talking through what the hearing process entails, points of good practice to focus on, as well as things to avoid and answering any questions they may have. These sessions are particularly useful for staff and governors who may not have attended a panel for a long time and for people who have never been to one.

Webinars

In addition to the termly webinar that will be released as part of the Complaints Toolkit (please see below), schools, settings and trusts will be able to request bespoke webinars delivered by a complaints professional. They can be delivered live with the opportunity for asking questions, or pre-recorded for staff and governors to watch at their convenience.

Complaints Toolkit

As part of the new service offer, a low-cost Complaints Toolkit has been created to enable schools, settings and trusts to effectively manage school-based complaints. The Toolkit will be reviewed annually, with helpdesk support available throughout the year (by phone and email) and a termly webinar being released. It has been designed to save school staff and governors time in dealing with concerns and complaints and trying to manage complainants' expectations by giving



suggestions and examples. The Toolkit provides:

- Step-by-step guidance on the complaints process from start to finish, complete with timescales.
- A suite of suggested responses with examples.
- An Essential Do's and Don'ts section to promote best practice.
- A summary of the process in flowchart format.

Recognising the significant budget pressures schools face, we have sought to keep the cost as low as possible and so the Toolkit has launched at £179 per school. A small schools discount of 10% is also available (for schools of 100 pupils or fewer on roll) taking the cost down to £161.10. An annual subscription to the Complaints Toolkit can be purchased from the HFL Education Hub Shop [here](#). For any other enquiries, please contact governance@hfleducation.org

GOVERNANCE LEADERSHIP.

The following lists the range of support we offer Chairs, Vice Chairs, Committee Chairs and aspiring Chairs in Hertfordshire.

- Chairs Network meetings
- Being an Effective Chair training
- Chairs Bulletin & Chairs Portal
- Termly Chairs Strategic briefings – two free places for all schools



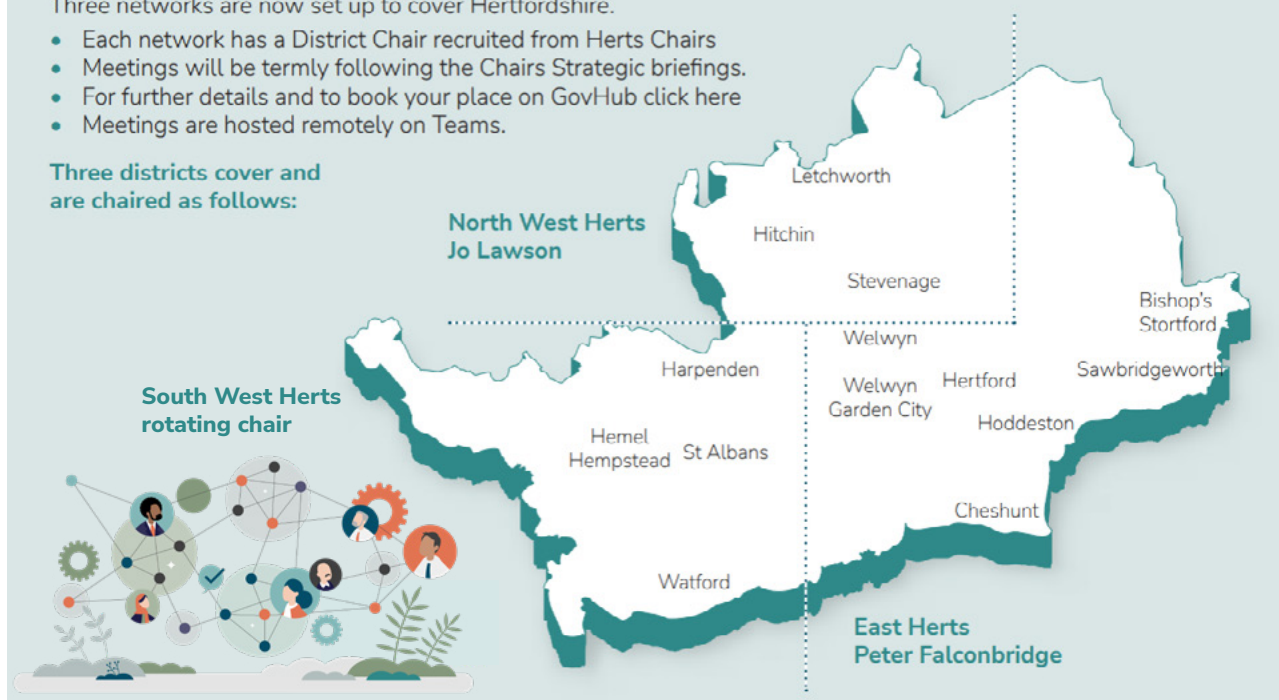
Chairs Networks

CHAIRS NETWORKS – RUN BY HERTFORDSHIRE CHAIRS FOR HERTFORDSHIRE CHAIRS.

Three networks are now set up to cover Hertfordshire.

- Each network has a District Chair recruited from Herts Chairs
- Meetings will be termly following the Chairs Strategic briefings.
- For further details and to book your place on GovHub click [here](#)
- Meetings are hosted remotely on Teams.

Three districts cover and are chaired as follows:



Next round of Chairs Network meetings TBA - look out for announcements on the Chairs Portal. Bookings will be through GovernorHub.

Being an Effective Chair training (BEC)

We are excited to announce a completely **new BEC training course** that will be launched this autumn, with the aim to **scaffold confidence in governance leadership roles**. This course is **free** to all Chairs Service subscribers with no limit on the number of places for your board, whether to **support those newly in position, support succession planning or as a refresher for those with experience!** We would be delighted to get your feedback on this completely revamped course.

Autumn term 2024 **remote** training dates can be booked [here](#).

Autumn term 2024 **face to face** training session can be booked [here](#).



Chairs Bulletin and Chairs Portal

- Half-termly publication available on the Chairs Portal.
- Please feel free to share it with your fellow governors
- Full of updates from the DfE, Ofsted, ESFA & other organisations in the education sector.
- Has reminders of upcoming dates for training and events.
- Look out for complete refresh of Chairs Portal content this summer!



Chairs Strategic Briefings

These termly online briefings are equally popular and essential, governance leaders will receive focussed updates on current challenges and best practice as well as the chance to ask the presenters questions. We regularly update on HR, Finance, Health & Safety, Safeguarding, SEND, Wellbeing and our popular 'what you need to know' item.

Next briefing:

- Tuesday October 15th
- Online
- 6-8pm

For more information and to book click [here](#).



If you would like more information on our Chairs Service (Governance Leadership) please contact Perdeep or Allison on the helpdesk who will be happy to assist: governance@hfleducation.org
01438 544487

.....

HFL GOVERNOR TRAINING

*****SAVE THE DATE*****

HFL Governors' Conference Saturday 16th November 2024

This in person event will be a chance for **governors and trustees** to come together to network, hear from keynote speakers and will provide the opportunity to ask questions of various HFL teams including Governance. Details and booking instructions to follow.

.....

Behaviour & Race Equality and Anti- Racism Briefing 7th October 6.30 – 8.30pm

This online session features two back-to-back briefings for governors. The first part focuses on what governors needs to know in terms of behaviour; and the second part focuses on the school's legal duty on race equality and anti-racism and what this means for the curriculum, policies and recruitment. For further details, charges and to book, please click [here](#).

.....

Cyber security in Schools – What governors need to know 14th October 6 – 7pm

Richard Martin the Head of Technology in Schools for HFL will provide an overview of cyber security in an education context, highlighting the role of Governors in understanding risks, appropriate mitigations and training required for both governing bodies and the wider school staff. Please note the briefing will be recorded for those unable to attend the live session.

.....

Also coming next term are sessions on Curriculum, RSHE, and Premises.

All governor training is bookable [here](#).

For queries related to governor training contact HFL Governance Courses gov.courses@hfleducation.org

.....

MODERN GOVERNOR



Modern Governor has launched a new module called Understanding a Multi academy Trust. This looks at the legal structures that underpin Trusts, helps you to understand why schools are joining MATs, how these settings are structured and governed, the role of local governance and the process to join a Multi academy trust.

Our Designated Administrator role, DAR, enables a nominated named user to have a school board overview of activity. They will be able to see users set up for the school board and training records for each user including when modules were completed.

The Modern Governor subscription includes access to our training pathways. We have four pathways to choose from, which bring together some of our most popular modules in a user-friendly way to support you to develop within your role, understand your responsibilities, and increase your knowledge. The pathway can be selected based on existing experience and completed at your own pace.

.....

HFL EDUCATION BLOGS

Click on the image to go straight the latest and ever popular Governance blog.....

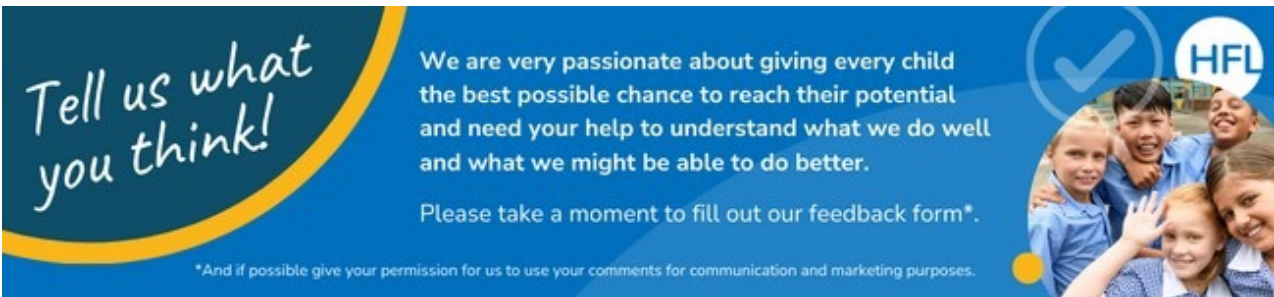


“ Recognising the benefits of continuous improvement and engaging in regular self-review, school governing bodies and trust boards can ensure they are well equipped to carry out their roles and responsibilities. ”

HFL

LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK

The new HFL FEEDBACK FORM has replaced the old shareholder annual survey.



Tell us what you think!

We are very passionate about giving every child the best possible chance to reach their potential and need your help to understand what we do well and what we might be able to do better.

Please take a moment to fill out our feedback form*.

*And if possible give your permission for us to use your comments for communication and marketing purposes.

HFL

GOVERNORHUB UPDATE

UPGRADE ON THE WAY....

We are happy to advise that over the past few months, work has been going on at GovernorHub in the background of the site to make it more efficient and future proof. The aim is to make it work better and faster. A new version will soon be ready for testing so we will keep you updated with news on any changes.

NEW GOVERNANCE GUIDES

GovernorHub were pleased to be linked as a resource in the new Governance Guides, **Maintained schools governance guide - Guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)** and **Academy trust governance guide - Guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)**

ONLINE EDITING OPTION

GovernorHub have now developed an online editing function for stored documents. If you would like to make further enquiries about adding this function to your board, please contact governance@hfleducation.org

CENSUS DATA HAS BEEN ADDED TO THE BOARD'S DIVERSITY DATA REPORTS

If you have downloaded diversity data reports recently you may have noticed that census data has been added to the reports. This is intended to provide boards with the tools to make comparisons between the makeup of their board and that of the local community so that they can start to work out what their stakeholders' needs are and how best to provide for them.

Having a diverse board is just a small aspect of being effective and of course boards are not expected make radical changes so that they mirror exactly the makeup of their local communities, but we do know that it is important to have the diversity of thought that brings in fresh ideas and discussions around issues affecting schools, so comparisons can be useful when looking at recruitment and succession planning for the board.

BOARD EFFECTIVENESS – WATCH THIS SPACE!

GovernorHub have started looking at the effectiveness of the board and are going to re-invent the old style skills audits that many boards currently use. This is a large piece of work which has been in the GovernorHub “pipeline” for a while now.

The new feature will provide a separate board effectiveness section accessed through your profile where you can go in and answer some questions about how effective you think you are within the board. The answers will then be collated for the whole board showing which areas need work.

Where this will differ from current skills audits is that it will be looking to evaluate areas that truly make a board effective rather than just writing lists of skills that people have and who has done what training. These areas will be Committing, Contributing, Leading, Aspiring, Evaluating and Analysing/Monitoring. An example would be taking into consideration whether a governor actually has the time to do a link role or responsibility effectively as well as if they have the experience or training.

Some softer skills will also be included, for example, do governors feel safe and respected in meetings, confident to speak up etc. The board may be full of governors who are very skilled in specific areas like finance and HR but if they are not able to speak up in a meeting for fear of their opinions not being respected then they are not being effective and more crucially neither is the board as a whole.

Finally, the board will also be able to collate information regarding specific skills and training, as well as ability, availability and willingness to carry out specific activities, for example to sit on panels or chair meetings. This should make things easier for complaint and exclusion co-ordinators and for the clerk.



INCREASED SECURITY – MULTI FACTOR AUTHENTICATION (MFA)

Sometimes a password is not enough..... MFA makes two checks to determine whether you really are you before it will allow you access to the site i.e. it checks that you know your password, but because passwords can be lost or guessed sometimes it also checks that you have access to a device that is registered to you that will generate six figure codes e.g. your mobile phone.

What if you don't have a mobile device? You can set up an extension on your browser which

gives you the code (so MFA is checking that you have a PC or laptop registered to you), or you can purchase a physical token that generates the codes.

MFA is easy to set up using your phone to scan a QR code which most of us are very familiar with. If you would like to switch to MFA please follow the steps in the GovernorHub Help article below:

<https://help.governorhub.com/en/articles/8582220-setting-up-multi-factor-authentication-mfa>

HAVE YOU SEEN THE HOOT?

A free area updated by GovernorHub and available to everyone with news articles, updates, podcasts etc. to help keep us all up to date and informed. All the articles have a helpful “read” time and you can set up subscription by email.

Access with this link <https://thehoot.news> or through GovernorHub on your news pages.



The Hoot

DfE, HCC AND OTHER NATIONAL UPDATES

HCC SAFEGUARDING UPDATE

The annual/termly safeguarding reports to governors have been updated on the Hertfordshire GRID. Please see link for details: <https://thegrid.org.uk/safeguarding-and-child-protection/child-protection/policies-procedures-and-forms>



HCC SEND UPDATE

Following the approval of Hertfordshire’s SEND Priority Action and Improvement Plan, the monthly newsletter from Hero Slinn, Director of Inclusion & Skills at Hertfordshire County Council has been shared on GovernorHub with the aim of keeping governors up to date.

Click [here](#) to access the full document.



Department
for Education

FREE SCHOOL MEALS (FSM) UPDATE

Duties that are placed on school leadership and management

Summary:

This is further information regarding new (March 2024) government guidance about children missing out on their entitlement to Free School Meals due to illness or due to their Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND). Even though the government guidance has recently been updated (March 2024), laws already existed which protect children from discrimination.

This concerns those who:

- are financially eligible
- have protected eligibility (ie until the end of primary phase of education, eg Ever 6 FSM)
- are entitled to Universal Infant FSM

Following a campaign, led by Natalie Hay and supported by Contact charity and Crowd-justice, the government have updated their policy to ensure that all children with SEND get their FSM entitlement: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools-and-local-authorities> (2018; last updated March 2024)

The new government guidelines, released in 2024 have moved from 3 to 19 pages and now include information on the legal term 'reasonable adjustments¹'. According to many recent surveys, families of children with disabilities² face increased financial costs and lost income because of their caring commitments.

"The cost-of-living-crisis is compounded by the cost-of-disability-crisis."

The Department for Education has now published specific guidelines to advise local authorities to make FSM reasonable adjustments to all children eligible for FSM, including those with EOTAS. The Education Act has always stated that children should get their free meal allowance from their place of learning, wherever that may be.

Schools should note that:

Section 512(2) of the Education Act 1996 confirms that the: *"provision of free school lunches shall be made either on the school premises or at any other place where education is being provided."*

Provision of education includes where work is sent home/online tutoring provided/Alternative Provision in place etc, during longer illness (which LAs must ensure as soon as it is apparent the child is likely to be absent for 15 or more days, including for reasons of mental ill health^{3,4}). It is not necessary for an eligible child to be in attendance on-site at their home-school, only on-roll and receiving education in an appropriate manner, whether part-time or full-time as best fits their SEND. The Equality Act 2010 states that reasonable adjustments must be made to prevent discrimination.



Local authorities should note that:

Under section 2(4) of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 (CSDPA 1970), it is stated that:

"local authorities must make necessary arrangements to meet the needs of disabled children in their area, including by providing meals at home or elsewhere (Section 2(6)(g) CSDPA 1970)."

The government guidelines have recently been updated (from 3 to 19 pages) but there has NOT been a law change, only a policy change to include the law, and with case studies and pages of information to encourage schools to act lawfully.

Children should already have been supported. There are usually two key reasons why they weren't:

1. SEND preventing access to their meals in the normal way
2. SCHOOLS and/or LAs unaware of the legal duties placed upon them to create a fair and reasonable adjustment for children with disabilities⁵

This includes children who are experiencing mental and emotional ill health, to such an extent

they are unable to attend school (EBSA / EBSNA), AND who are entitled to FSM (whether through UIFSM or financial eligibility), or those who are unable to eat the school meals due to sensory processing difficulties (eg a child with autism who cannot eat anything other than white bread and a specific cheese spread ('safe foods' / ARFID) or with specific medical needs that dictate a specialised diet).

A reasonable adjustment could include:

- preparing a meal each day that caters to that child's difficulties / safe foods, eg where a child attends school but cannot access the school lunch to which they are entitled, and perhaps parents have been sending in a tailored packed lunch
- preparing a hot meal / packed lunch each day for the family to collect, eg where a child is too ill to attend, including through mental and / or emotional ill health
- provision of e-vouchers for supermarket use, as were issued during Lockdowns, and are continuing to be issued to eligible families during school holidays



The school has a duty to make a reasonable adjustment. That duty may be fulfilled in different ways, of which vouchers may be an option. For some families, the first two options would not constitute a reasonable adjustment as they still place the child and family at a substantial disadvantage over and above their peers, eg through parents travelling to school to collect a meal each day, stigma, etc. For many families the third option is the only reasonable adjustment, and the mechanisms are already in place to offer families this discreet and practical option.

¹<https://www.gov.uk/rights-disabled-person/education-rights>

²<https://www.gov.uk/definition-of-disability-under-equality-act-2010>

³<https://www.gov.uk/illness-child-education>

⁴<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-for-children-with-health-needs-who-cannot-attend-school> (2013; last updated Dec 2023)

⁵<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions--3> (2014; last updated Aug 2017)

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS CO-ORDINATOR'S (SENCO) NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION

Updated DfE guidance was issued at the end of April about the new mandatory course for special educational needs co-ordinators to learn how to effectively perform the SENCO role.

Read the full guidance [here](#).

- NPQ for SENCOs will be the mandatory qualification for SENCOs from autumn 2024.
 - 3-year window to complete the qualification on taking up a SENCO post will remain.
 - This qualification is not required for those with NASENCO qualification; those who are currently completing NASENCO; and those who became SENCOs before September 2009.
-

CYBER SECURITY

The DfE announced in May 2024 new **cyber security standards for schools**, they state that ‘Basic cyber security knowledge amongst staff and governors is vital in promoting a more risk aware school culture’.

To this end, they further add that to meet this standard ‘at least one member of the governing body should complete cyber security training’ in the **Maintained schools governance guide** (7.7.3) and the **Academy trust governance guide** (7.9.3).

SCHOOL UNIFORM

School uniform guidance has been updated on the 29th April with additional support published on developing a school uniform policy and also procuring school uniform supplies **School uniforms: guidance for schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)**.

OFSTED

Ofsted announced on May 4th that ‘Deep Dives’ during ungraded inspections will end from September 2024. Ofsted’s chief inspector, Sir Martin Oliver announced, ‘The changes are designed to reduce the burden on school leaders and allow more time and flexibility for inspectors to get to know the school, including its context and priorities.’ **‘Deep dives’ removed from ungraded inspections - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)**.

PE AND SPORTS IN SCHOOLS

Non-statutory guidance has been updated **PE and sports in schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)** and states: “This document informs schools how to meet the ambitions of the national curriculum and the CMOs’ physical activity guidelines by showcasing case studies of how this has been successfully achieved. The guidance will set out a variety of schools’ approaches of embedding PE, physical activity and sport into their culture, ethos, and values, and it will set out how they approach delivering: a minimum two hours of PE per week during curriculum time, and equality of access to PE and extra-curricular school sport and competition”.



OTHER NEWS...

WILDER SCHOOL CHAMPIONS

Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust are supporting local schools to improve their grounds for the benefit of wildlife and create opportunities for students to enjoy and connect with nature. We are offering visits from our volunteer Wilder School Champions to all schools and colleges in Herts & Middlesex where they will meet with school staff and/or students, walk around the grounds and provide recommendations and ideas for how the school could create more habitat for wildlife. The school will receive these recommendations in the form of a simple plan and get the chance to organise a follow up visit with their champion six months to a year later to show what they have achieved and receive further guidance. To cover our costs and allow us to continue this work, we ask -for schools that are able- for a suggested donation of £100 for the two visits.

