Autumn Issue
October 2026

HILLINGDON
LONDON

Schools Governors' Update

Dear Governors,
Governing boards are settling back into the routine of the school year, with your initial meetings having provided an opportunity to look ahead to future priorities whilst reflecting on the successes, achievements and challenges of last year.

As a governor you are not there to solve every problem in the education system, but to ask the questions that need asking, understand what change means for your own organisation, support and challenge leaders, and hold every decision made with the interests of Hillingdon's children and their communities at its centre.

This edition of the newsletter highlights key developments in education and governance, shares useful updates and outlines governor training that has been scheduled, with more to be added in due course. We hope you find the information both informative and helpful as you navigate your way through this academic year.

Training and updates
Upcoming events

An Overview of Schools Finance for Governors, Knowing your Responsibilities - Monday 23 November 2026 at 6pm *Book Here*

An online session will be delivered by Luisa Hansen, Head of Finance, Education and SEND and will provide an update on school's finance in Hillingdon, as well as a brief overview of where schools' funding comes from. It will also outline the key responsibilities that governors play in managing and monitoring school budgets.

Chair and Vice Chair of Governors Briefing – Monday 25 January 2027 at 6pm *Book Here*

The Governance Services Team understand the importance of the chair's and vice chair's role is in driving school improvement and therefore are introducing briefing sessions to assist them in their role.

The briefings are aimed to support chairs in this unique position equipping them with the knowledge, information and advice needed to effectively undertake their role.

Understanding School Performance Data for Governors – Monday 1 March 2027 at 6pm *Book Here*

This session will equip governors with the skills to understand and interpret key school data, enabling them to engage confidently in data-focused meetings. Governors will learn how to use evidence to challenge and support school leaders, helping to drive continual improvement and raise pupil attainment.

Understanding the Ofsted Inspection Updates for School Governors – Monday 19 April 2027 at 6pm *Book Here*

The training will explore the Ofsted report card framework, offering practical guidance for governors. This session will support governors in understanding their role before, during and after an Ofsted inspection, with a focus on how to work effectively with school leaders in light of the new report card framework. Chairs of governors who have recently been through an inspection will also share their feedback during the session.

Details of all previous events can be found here: *Governance – LEAP*

Understanding the role of Send and Safeguarding Link Governors

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Continued

The Role of the Safeguarding Link Governor

The Safeguarding Link Governor provides assurance to the governing board that the school has effective safeguarding arrangements in place and that children are safe.

This role involves working closely with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Headteacher, and wider leadership team to understand how safeguarding responsibilities are implemented across the school.

National updates

Updated governance guidance

The DfE's updated *Maintained Schools Governance Guide* reinforces expectations around strategic leadership, accountability, compliance and board evaluation.

The term started with an avalanche of new and updated policies for boards to review and seek assurance that these are being implemented. These were driven by the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 and Every Child Achieving and Thriving schools' White Paper.

These reforms to England's school system include targeting inclusion, safeguarding, curriculum modernisation, cost-of-living support, and structural changes to trusts. They are part of a long-term strategy to raise standards and reduce inequality across the education sector.

Safeguarding

This remains at the heart of effective governance. Governors should ensure safeguarding training is up to date, that they receive regular safeguarding reports and be confident that statutory policies and procedures are robust and compliant.

These include areas such as medical conditions, the new *Allergy safety in schools statutory guidance* introducing the requirement of a new standalone allergy policy, as well as the *Changes to the volunteer DBS checking arrangements* that are to be implemented.

Mobile Phones *Mobile phones in schools*

Statutory guidance was given on how to implement a policy that prohibits the use of mobile phones throughout the school day. Governors should review existing policies and seek assurance that arrangements are understood and implemented consistently across the school.

School attendance

This remains a national priority. Updated statutory guidance *DfE Working together to improve school attendance* emphasises the role of governing boards in monitoring attendance data, challenging persistent absence and ensuring effective support is in place for vulnerable pupils, including those with SEND, mental health needs and young carers. Governors should be asking how attendance compares with national figures and what impact improvement strategies are having.

Inclusion and SEND

This continues to receive significant attention, with greater emphasis being placed on schools' inclusion strategies, engagement with families and support for pupils with additional needs. Boards should seek assurance that inclusive practice is embedded across the school and reflected in improvement plans. Governors should continue to focus on educational outcomes for all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND.

In Hillingdon we have created the *Experts at Hand* Working group with school representatives from each of the six locality clusters. They will support the co-production, design and implementation of this model. Working alongside schools, specialist services, health partners and families, the group will help shape a locality-based approach to early intervention and inclusion, develop access pathways to specialist support, and identify how expertise can be delivered more effectively throughout Hillingdon.

The group will also inform future workforce development, service design and commissioning arrangements to strengthen inclusive practice and improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND. There will in future be wider opportunities for schools and settings to contribute to this as the model develops and all schools will be kept informed of the progress.

This collaborative working and continued commitment between schools and the council will strengthen inclusion and improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND across Hillingdon.

Ofsted

Nearly a year on from the launch of the new framework, some amendments have been made to the inspection guidance to reflect inspection practice. These are outlined in the *Summary of changes*

Once again, thank you for your commitment, dedication and engagement to school governance. We are grateful for the support, challenge and valuable insight you provide to our schools, as well as for the generosity of your time.

Please do not hesitate to contact the LA Schools' Governance Service if you have any queries.

LA Schools' Governance Service

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