

AUTUMN 2 2024

NAGAS NEWSLETTER

Newsletter for the National Association of Governance Advisory Services



WELCOME TO THE AUTUMN TERM 2 NEWSLETTER



NAGAS

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
GOVERNANCE ADVISORY SERVICES

As you can see from the branding of this newsletter we have now relaunched the organisation as the National Association of Governance Advisory Services (NAGAS). You will see these changes reflected on your GovernorHub pages too. If you have not yet had an opportunity to do so then please have a look at the brilliant new website www.nagas.org, which much better reflects the membership, vibrancy and direction of the organisation. Hopefully you will have had an opportunity within your regional meetings to volunteer to join the national group, as we have widened membership so that two individuals from each of the regions can support the national board. We look forward to welcoming the additional representatives at our next meeting on Friday 6 December – do please share your regions suggestions, ideas and concerns through your regional reps.

The autumn conference (was that really only last month?!) was a great success; thank you to everyone who attended, all our speakers and the board members who worked hard behind the scenes to organise the event and ensure things ran smoothly on the day. (Special mention for John Ashworth, our vice-chair, who definitely gets the Gold Star Award.) We are already starting to think about plans for next year.



Fiona Collier
Chair



John Ashworth
Vice-Chair

CONTACT

BEC DAVEY - NAGAS CO-ORDINATOR & CLERK

Email: bdaveyclerk@outlook.com

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We have heard from colleagues across the country that this term has felt extremely busy, right from the outset, with no apparent let-up in sight. Do reach out to colleagues within your regional network for support, there is a really positive safety net of professional generosity out there, so never struggle alone! If there are any common themes occurring within your region do share these through your regional rep, so the NAGAS board can look at these on a national basis. The upcoming networking and CPD event (online next week, on Friday 29 November) is also an opportunity to touch base with others in similar governance advisory roles. Do please take advantage of this opportunity to share thoughts, solutions and challenges!

As we race towards the Christmas break it only remains for us to wish you all a calm last few weeks of term and to thank you, as always, for the amazing work you do every day to support governors, trustees, clerks and governance professionals!



School-based nursery grant applications now open

The School-Based Nursery Capital Grant is a one-time grant available for eligible state-funded primary-phase schools. Schools can bid for up to £150,000 of funding to use solely for capital expenditure, to convert surplus space within a school building so that it is suitable for nursery provision. Funding is expected to be allocated to successful schools in spring 2025 to support delivery for the first cohort of places for the September rollout. According to the Department for Education's projections, around 70,000 additional places and 35,000 early years educators will still be needed to deliver the expansion to 30 hours next September, with some of the most disadvantaged areas in need of the largest uplifts. [The projections show that around half of local areas need to increase their capacity](#) by between 10% and 20% to meet demand for September. Some need an uplift of more than 20% - with areas that see traditionally lower household incomes including Northumberland, Plymouth and Rotherham all in this group.

[Further information](#) and apply.

Bridget Phillipson speech



The Education Secretary spoke at the recent Confederation of School Trusts (CST) conference, setting out plans and commitments for the sector, including the curriculum review, Ofsted reform, funding for schools, teacher recruitment and retention plans and SEND reform.

[Transcript of the speech](#)



Ofsted publishes their inspector training



Six recordings have been published including sessions from the spring 2024 school inspector conference:

- an introduction to the conference from Ofsted's National Director for Education, Lee Owston
- setting off on the right foot (well-being)
- context and impact: getting beneath the surface
- inspecting attendance well.

Two more general training recordings from the early autumn term have also been published:

- Inspecting in the best interest of children
- Inspection Data Summary Report (IDSR).

[Access the six training videos](#)

Previous mental health awareness training for inspectors, from January 2024 can be viewed on the [Ofsted Academy website](#)

Academy conversion grant ending



The academy conversion support grant currently gives schools up to £25,000 to spend on the process of converting to an academy. The grant supports schools choosing to convert voluntarily. It will end on 1 January 2025.

[Academy conversion grant](#)



Trust Capacity Funding (TCaF) withdrawn

The DfE has removed Trust Capacity Funding, which Trusts could bid for to help build their capacity to take underperforming schools into the Trust. There are fears in the sector that the removal of this funding may impact on Trust's abilities to accept additional schools. Trusts which currently have bids for funding in process with the DfE will not be awarded any funding and there are no plans to open any further funding rounds.

Intervention model for regional school improvement

It is planned there will be nine Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence (RISE) teams across the country, aligned with the Regions Groups.

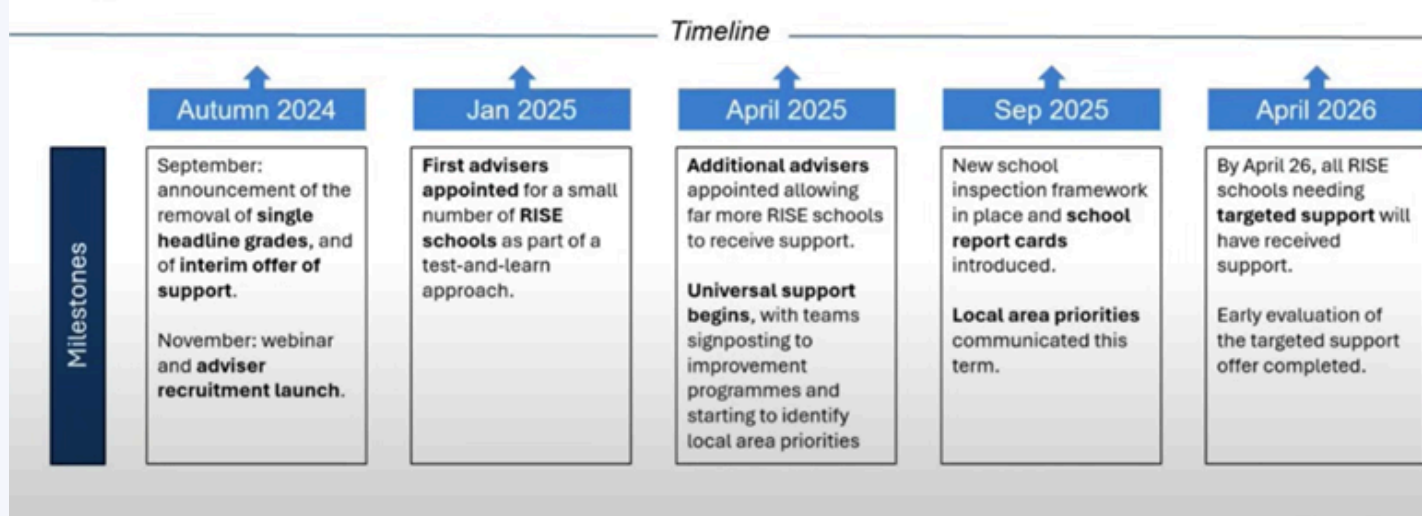
RISE teams: policy framework

RISE teams will sit within a new framework of support and intervention. Their focus will be strongly informed by the Report Card, after Sept 2025.

Report Card identifies:		Role of the RISE team:
Minimal issues <u>and</u> strong leadership/school improvement capacity Well-performing schools that can support the wider system	Universal Support →	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a coherent set of local area priorities, especially in key areas such as SEND, attendance and reception Supporting a self-improving system by improving signposting to a wide range of support, including hubs and leading schools Promote sharing of good practice and networking
Schools with singular or several issues needing specific, more intensive support, which have leadership capacity to improve Schools requiring immediate support outside of inspections	Targeted Support →	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A bespoke package of support from a supporting organisation such as a MAT, federation or LA partnership, drawing in further capacity from elsewhere as needed
Schools requiring intervention	Intervention →	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No role for the RISE team (other than potentially in the short term to provide emergency support to a school pending intervention)

RISE teams: timeline

We will introduce RISE teams from January 2025. RISE teams will be phased, beginning in January, with more schools supported from April 2025, and then more again the following year to allow for a test-and-learn approach and to support evaluation.



The slides above are from a video recording, where John Edwards, Director General, DfE Regions Group, talks about the new regional improvement for standards and excellence (RISE) teams, including their remit, how they will be formed and deployed and how to apply for a role on one of the teams. [Watch the video on YouTube](#)

Operation Encompass



On 24 May 2024 Royal Assent was granted to The Victims and Prisoners Act. The new Act placed Operation Encompass into Law and puts a statutory obligation on police forces to share Operation Encompass notifications with schools.

Operation Encompass is a police and education early information safeguarding partnership enabling schools to offer immediate support to children experiencing domestic abuse.

Operation Encompass ensures that there is a simple telephone call or notification to a school's trained Designated Safeguarding Lead /Officer (known as key Adult) prior to the start of the next school day after an incident of police attended domestic abuse where there are children related to either of the adult parties involved.

Information is shared with a school's Key Adult (Designated Safeguarding Lead or Officer) prior to the start of the next school day after officers have attended a domestic abuse incident. This sharing of information enables appropriate support to be given, dependent upon the needs and wishes of the child. Children are negatively impacted by experiencing domestic abuse and without early intervention and support this negative impact can last through a child's life course. Domestic abuse can impact upon social, psychological, physical, emotional and behavioural outcomes with an often negative impact upon a child's academic success. Experiencing domestic abuse has been identified as an Adverse Childhood Experience.

Operation Encompass aims, by directly connecting police and schools, to secure better outcomes for children , to enable schools to better understand the impact living with domestic abuse has upon children, to help schools to better understand a child's lived experience and to therefore be able to support and nurture each child , making a child's day better and giving them a better tomorrow.

There is further information available on the Operation Encompass website, including **free training** through the National College, which governors and trustees are welcome to attend.

[Home : Operation Encompass](#)



DfE filtering and monitoring standards

The DfE has updated the standards, including placing emphasis on the board responsibility to ensure the school has appropriate filtering and monitoring systems. The document explains that filtering is preventative. It refers to solutions that protect users from accessing illegal, inappropriate and potentially harmful content online. It does this by identifying and blocking specific web links and web content in the form of text, images, audio and video.

Monitoring is reactive. It refers to solutions that monitor what users are doing on devices and, in some cases, records this activity. Monitoring can be manual, for example, teachers viewing screens as they walk around a classroom. Technical monitoring solutions rely on software applied to a device that views a user's activity. Reports or alerts are generated based on illegal, inappropriate, or potentially harmful activities, including bullying. Monitoring solutions do not block users from seeing or doing anything.

[Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges - Filtering and monitoring standards for schools and colleges - Guidance - GOV.UK](#)



What schools must or should publish online



This DfE information has been updated. For **maintained schools** the changes relate to information to be published under the section on 'test, exam and assessment results'. The information to be provided about governors within the section on 'governance information'. The 'pupil premium' and 'PE and Sport Premium' sections have also been updated, as has the section relating to the school 'complaints policy'.

[What maintained schools must or should publish online - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-maintained-schools-must-or-should-publish-online)

For **academy schools and FE colleges** changes include updates to the 'test, exam and assessment results' section, meaning that some of the information which academies and FE colleges should publish has changed in that section. A new section on the information that FE colleges in intervention must publish. Updated information for academies in the 'behaviour policy' section. Changes to the 'pupil premium', 'PE and sport premium', 'complaints policy' and 'governance information' sections.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-academies-free-schools-and-colleges-should-publish-online>

Children in Care: Guide for School Governors 2024

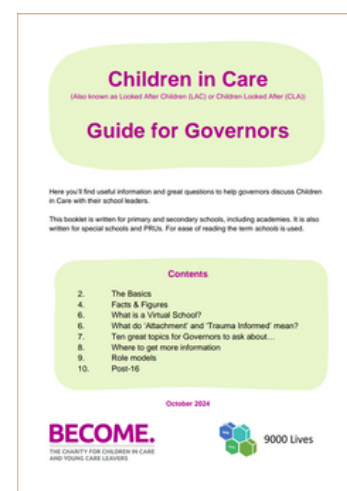


Become, the charity for children in care and young care leavers, has produced a guide for governing boards, explaining the basics and what boards need to know relating to children in care (CiC), alongside questions that board members can ask. The guide covers CiC from EYFS classes up to Year 13 and is suitable for both academies and maintained schools, special schools and PRUs.

The questions for board members to ask are focused around 10 key areas:

- Quick questions for a brand-new governor
- Leadership and management
- Previously looked after children
- Child's voice
- Inclusion
- Home-school links
- Funding
- Attendance
- Staff skills
- Information and partnerships

There is also a set of questions specifically for post-16 providers.



[Children in Care: Guide for School Governors - Become](#)

Managing academy trust reserves – new guidance from the DfE



This new guidance document seeks to support trust and trust governing boards to effectively manage their reserves. Within the section on governance the guide sets out:

Considerations for the board

To ensure the trust is using its funding adequately for current and future pupils, the board might want to consider:

- what reserves are readily available for use – how much is tied up in other assets and whether there are any future commitments that need to be considered, such as:
 - DfE loan repayments
 - operating leases
 - ongoing capital works
- if funds are not needed now, how the trust might be able to invest them to generate some extra income
- pupil numbers for the next few years and whether there might be:
 - increases that may require additional staffing or facilities
 - decreases that might mean reduced future income
 - opportunities to apply for local growth funding
- premises priorities that may need either maintenance or site improvements
- bidding processes or other funds the trust can apply to and how much of a contribution from reserves they might need, if any
- changes to the curriculum or staffing structure, including:
 - resources and training needed for staff that go beyond day-to-day spending
 - any other investment needed to support educational improvement

Strategic planning

The board should also consider their strategic planning, including:

- whether any of the schools are expanding or changing their age range
- opportunities for expanding the trust to support other schools to improve, or bringing in wider expertise and experience
- actions that may be needed to protect educational performance as well as the financial health of the trust if they are not planning to grow
- whether the trust's assessment of reserves levels mean that its accounts can be prepared on a 'going concern' basis – the guidance on [operating an academy trust as a going concern](#) has more information about this

You can read the guidance in full on the DfE website: [Managing academy trust reserves - GOV.UK](#)



Cost of a school meal

A recent report by School Food Matters considers what it takes to provide healthy, sustainable, and delicious school lunches in England. This comprehensive study, funded by Impact on Urban Health and conducted by Bremner & Co and Cohesion Consulting, aims to shed light on the true costs associated with school meals and to propose a model for future costings.

Ten main themes were identified:

- A gap between real costs and the funding rate per meal
- An increase in the range of costs and prices charged
- Staff shortages, pay and conditions
- Significant variations in quality assurance processes
- Requirements to meet diverse dietary patterns and allergens
- Catering arrangements (and contracts) are diverse and complicated
- Meeting health and sustainability aspirations
- Secondary school economics divorced from primary
- Less value being placed on quality accreditation schemes
- Provision in SEND settings is a totally different operation.



One of the key findings is the significant variation in costs and quality assurance processes across different types of schools. For instance, the cost of providing a meal in primary schools differs from that in secondary schools due to varying staffing requirements and economies of scale. Additionally, the operational challenges faced by catering teams, such as staff shortages and the need to meet diverse dietary requirements, further complicate the cost structure.

One of the most striking findings of the report is the significant funding gap in the current school meal system. The research shows that the total cost of a school meal in 2024 is at least 38p above the current government funding rate of £2.53 per meal. This gap has several implications, including schools running deficit budgets, difficulties in staff recruitment and retention, and a lack of investment in kitchen equipment. Moreover, the use of lower quality ingredients and pre-prepared foods to minimise costs poses risks to the quality of meals served.

Recommendations and Next Steps

The report concludes with several recommendations to address these challenges and ensure the provision of high-quality, nutritious, and sustainable school meals. These include:

- Increasing Funding: Adjusting the funding rate to reflect the true costs of providing a healthy and sustainable meal
- Supporting Staff: Investing in staff training and development to improve recruitment and retention
- Enhancing Quality Assurance: Implementing robust quality assurance measures to ensure high standards are maintained across all schools.

<https://www.schoolfoodmatters.org/sites/default/files/2024-10/CoaSM-report.pdf>



On a related theme the Child Poverty Action Group has published a report into the cost of a school meal, highlighting concerns around increasing levels of debt for school meals. Overall, debt has risen by around 50 per cent over the past two academic years. [Download the report](#)



Schools financial value standard (SFVS) – maintained schools



The SFVS guidance and checklist has been updated for 2024/25 with a submission deadline of 31 March 2025. The governing board, through the finance/resources committee or finance lead, should have input into completing the checklist, which asks 30 questions of the board relating to six areas of resource management. A guidance document is provided, explaining what each question means, how to identify good practice and what steps to take if things are not right. Sadly many boards are not fully involved in the SFVS, leaving it to the School Business Manager and leadership to respond to the questions. As many of the questions relate specifically to the role of the board hopefully we can prompt them to engage with the process early in the spring term, prior to the deadline for submission. The questions are summarised below for ease.

Financial management and governance

1. Does the governing body have adequate and up-to-date financial skills among its members to fulfil its role of challenge and support in the field of budget management and value for money? Is there a plan in place to address any gaps?
2. Does the governing body have a finance committee, or equivalent, with clear terms of reference and a knowledgeable and experienced chair?
3. Does the governing body receive clear and concise monitoring reports of the school's budget position at least 6 times a year?
4. Are business interests of governing body members and staff properly registered and taken into account so as to avoid conflicts of interest?
5. Does the school have access to an adequate level of financial expertise, including when specialist finance staff are absent, for example, on sick leave?

Strategy

1. Does the school have a realistic, sustainable and flexible financial strategy in place for at least 3 years, based on realistic assumptions about future funding, pupil numbers and pressures?
2. Does the school take an integrated approach to curriculum and financial planning?
3. Does the school have an appropriate business continuity or disaster recovery plan, including an up-to-date asset register and adequate insurance?

Setting the annual budget

1. Does the school set a well-informed and balanced 3-year budget and has this been submitted to the local authority?
2. Does the budget setting process allow sufficient time for the governing body to scrutinise and challenge the information provided?
3. Is the school realistic in its pupil number projections and can it move quickly to recast the budget if the projections and the reality are materially different?
4. Is end year outturn in line with budget projections, or if not, is the governing body alerted to significant variations in a timely manner, and do they result from explicitly planned changes or from genuinely unforeseeable circumstances?
5. Are balances at a reasonable level and does the school have a clear plan for using the money it plans to hold in balance at the end of each year?

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Staffing

1. Does the school review its staffing structure regularly to ensure it is the best structure to meet the needs of the school whilst maintaining financial integrity?
2. Has the use of professional independent advice informed part of the pay decision process in relation to the head teacher and is it tightly correlated to strong educational outcomes and sound financial management?
3. Has the school published on its website the number of employees (if any) whose gross salary exceeded £100,000?
4. Does the school benchmark the size of its senior leadership team annually against that of similar schools?

Value for money

1. Does the school benchmark its income and expenditure and investigate further where any category appears to be out of line?
2. Has the school leadership team considered the results of the DfE benchmarking tools?
3. Does the school have procedures for purchasing goods and services that both meet legal requirements and secure value for money?
4. Is the governing body given the opportunity to challenge the school's plans for replacing contracts for goods and services that are due to expire?
5. Does the school consider collaboration with others, for example, on sharing staff or joint purchasing, where that would improve value for money?
6. Does the school seek to use DfE approved frameworks, where applicable, to ensure procurement compliance and value for money?
7. Does the school maintain its premises and other assets to an adequate standard and make best use of capital monies for this purpose?

Protecting public money

1. Is the governing body sure that there are no outstanding matters from audit reports or from previous consideration of weaknesses by the governing body?
2. Are there adequate arrangements in place to manage related party transactions and has a complete list of related party transactions been appended to the checklist document? (A template is provided by the DfE)
3. Are there adequate arrangements in place to guard against fraud and theft by staff, contractors and suppliers?
4. Are all staff aware of the school's whistleblowing arrangements and to whom they should report concerns?
5. Does the school have an accounting system that is adequate and properly run and delivers accurate reports, including the consistent financial reporting return?
6. Does the school have adequate arrangements for audit of voluntary funds?

[Schools financial value standard - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-resource-management-self-assessment-checklist)

Academy self-assessment checklist



The equivalent for the academy sector is the School Resource Management Self-Assessment Checklist, which poses similar questions for Trust boards, although the academy version has a total of 40, rather than 30, questions to consider. Again, guidance is provided, explaining the purposes behind the question, help to evaluate where the board/trust sits in terms of good practice and steps to take if things are not right. This document has been updated for 2024/25, the submission link will become live in January 2025.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-resource-management-self-assessment-checklist>



In conversation with Stephen Morgan, Minister for Early Education



A live online event with the Minister for Early Education where he will answer a selection of questions from the audience, raised via the live chat facility, about the government's plans for the sector. At the live event with the Secretary of State last half term there were a number of questions raised about recruitment and retention within the early years sector and the capacity to deliver the promised additional childcare provision. Bridget Phillipson promised at that time that there would be a specific event looking at the early years sector and addressing these questions. The event takes place on Wednesday 4 December, 18.00 -18.45. Free tickets can be booked via [eventbrite](#).



The Teacher Wellbeing Index 2024

Education Support, a leading UK charity which advocates for the mental health of teachers and education staff, has released its eighth Teacher Wellbeing Index.

Findings from the survey of over 3,000 staff include:

82% of the workforce who told us that challenging behaviour by pupils and students had increased, said this negatively affected their mental health and wellbeing

70% who report a similar increase in challenging interactions with parents said it had the same effect on their mental health

84% of staff who told us that that verbal or physical abuse by pupils or students has increased believe it is due to a lack of provision for students' physical, emotional, and mental health needs.

[Read more and download the full report](#)

Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive publication

On Monday 18 November 2024, the government published 'Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive', the new Children's Social Care policy statement. The party claims this is the biggest overhaul in a generation to children's social care.

This new statement summarises the government's vision for a decade of reform and a legislative agenda to reset the children's social care system. It covers how national government will collaborate with local government and take a whole system approach.

You can read the [policy statement](#) in full and the [press release](#) summarising the announcement.



New DfE attendance toolkit

Schools can now access a new DfE [attendance toolkit](#) developed in collaboration with Rob Tarn, National Attendance Ambassador, and attendance hub leads.

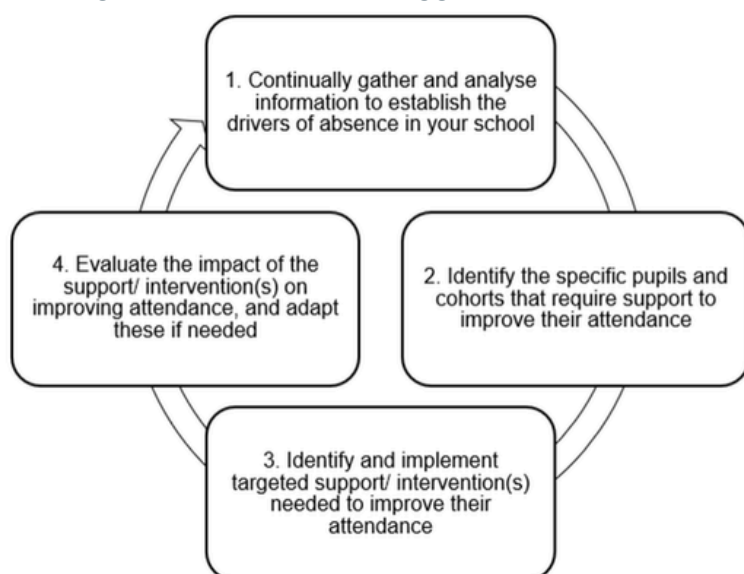
It helps schools identify drivers of absence and adopt effective practice to improve attendance.

The foreword explains that evidence suggests that almost two thirds of children are missing between 5% and 15% of time in school. The toolkit includes a self-assessment, the results of which governing boards may find useful to gain a perspective for the issues the setting is currently facing and the impact of interventions to date.

The toolkit provides tools, templates, videos, case studies and examples of successful actions taken by schools across six areas:

1. Data and targeted support: how to gather, share and use attendance data to put in place action to improve attendance.
2. Culture: how to embed a support-first culture to encourage high attendance and make school a place children want to attend.
3. People: how to make attendance 'everyone's business' and ensure individuals and teams work together to reduce absence.
4. Processes and systems: how to develop and implement strong and rigorous processes to identify and respond quickly and effectively to absence.
5. Relationships: how to build strong and positive relationships with pupils and families to understand, then prevent or remove barriers to attendance.
6. Communications: how to develop and share strong and inclusive attendance communications that convey messages with impact.

For example, when looking at data, the toolkit suggests that schools and boards



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Mainstream secondary schools can now download an attendance summary report from the 'monitor your school attendance' service.

The report is specific to each school and summarises:

- overall attendance and persistent absence compared with national averages
- attendance for different pupil groups compared with the national average and previous academic year
- pupils in 5% absence bands, by year group.

Much of the toolkit's content also exemplifies how schools can meet the seven expectations in the Department for Education's 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance, which became statutory in August 2024.

Confederation of School Trusts (CST) 'next-gen governance' paper



This discussion paper sets out why and how trust governance can evolve to focus more on forward strategy than compliance, engaging a broader range of voices and better serving communities. The paper sets out that *'we need governance that evolves and is thoughtfully designed for the 'now', with cultures that are resilient and sustainable. We can no longer simply rely on the ways of the past: governance vacancies are at an all-time high and 40% of CEOs we surveyed identified succession planning as a governance priority. Only 35% are aged under 50, and more likely to have direct recent experience of the education system. Why is this? Is it a question of capacity? Is it the expectations and workload? Or is it the way we carry out governance?'*

The paper also discusses the vital role for the Governance Professional, and how this role is often undervalued. The paper puts strong governance support at the centre of effective governance.

[Download the full report from the CST website](#)



Lunch & Learn



NAGAS CPD and networking sessions

The next networking event will be held virtually (via Teams) on Friday 29th November from 12.30 – 2.00pm. Bookings can be made via [GovernorHub](#)

The session will be an open forum for the membership to raise issues or topics on which they wish to seek the views of others. We will have a few 'starters for 10', but want this session to be focused on the areas of importance to you.

If you have any particular questions, or topics you would like included, please email the NAGAS clerk, Bec Davey, by 4.00pm on Thursday 28th November bdaveyclerk@outlook.com

We look forward to welcoming you!

Dates for your diary

The future sessions are on the following dates (booking is already open on GovernorHub):

Friday 7th February 2025 from 12:30 - 2:00pm [BOOK](#)

Friday 21st March 2025 from 12:30 - 2:00pm [BOOK](#)

Friday 5th June 2025 from 12:30 - 2:00pm [BOOK](#)

Children's Mental Health Week 2025

3-9 February 2025. Place2Be's children's mental health week first launched ten years ago. The focus for February is 'know yourself, grow yourself' with the aim to equip and empower children and young people across the UK to embrace self-awareness and explore what it means to them. There are lots of free resources and activities for schools to use during the week, created in partnership with The Walt Disney Company, featuring the Inside Out 2 characters.

<https://www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk/schools/>

