



A special edition of our bulletin for governors and trustees in IPC Services schools and academies.

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## **Virtual Governance**

As restrictions on social contact ease, you will no doubt be considering a return to face-to-face meetings and/or how to continue using technology to support the work of your board.

We encourage all governing boards to discuss and evaluate their experiences of virtual and remote governance to help reach a view on how to conduct board business in future.

## **PE and Sports Premium**

The DfE has confirmed that schools and trusts will not be able to carry forward any unspent PE and Sports Premium funding into the next academic year and the funding must be spent by the end of this academic year.

## **Transition Days**

The DfE has been asked to clarify whether pupils from a range of feeder schools may be placed in the same class for a transition day/week and has responded as follows:-

- The latest guidance says schools should complete thorough risk assessments before running transitional, taster and open days, to ensure that they are run in line with the system of controls and the roadmap out of lockdown.
- DfE expects schools to plan these days with the bubbles system in mind, keeping children in their existing bubbles as far as possible, to reduce transmission risks. Children from different primary schools should not be in the same groups. This does of course mean that these days will not run exactly as normal and DfE appreciates that careful planning may be required.

It is possible that COVID-19 safety arrangements could change, the current requirement is to maintain bubbles, including during transition days, so leaders will need to keep this in mind when planning these events

## The School Admissions Code

The DfE has published its outcome of the consultation on changes to the Schools Admissions Code and updated the Code for September 2021, which, subject to Parliamentary approval, will come into force from 1 September 2021.

The following are some (not all) of the changes identified in the consultation outcome:-

- In all circumstances admission authorities should aim to notify parents of the outcome of their in-year applications in writing within 10 school days.
- There is an existing requirement for own admission authority schools to inform the local authority of in-year applications and the outcome of those applications. This enables local authorities to keep up to date figures on the availability of school places, take any necessary safeguarding action for a child who is without a school place and ensure unplaced children are secured a school place quickly. New wording makes it clear that notification should take place as soon as reasonably practicable and within two school days where possible.
- A child is only be eligible to be placed via the Fair Access Protocol where they have not been able to secure a school place in-year and they fall into one of the specified Fair Access Protocol categories.
- Changes to the list of children eligible for Fair Access Protocols, including adding additional categories to the list, is no longer allowed.
- For the sole purpose of participating in the Fair Access Protocol, the governing body or academy trust may delegate admission decisions to an individual, such as the headteacher.
- A child can only be refused on the grounds of challenging behaviour under certain circumstances.
- Children referred to the Fair Access Protocol should be allocated a school place within 20 school days.
- For services children, admission authorities must not refuse to process an application solely because the family do not yet have an intended address.
- An admission authority may decide to admit over their planned admission number, for example to accommodate a bulge year, but the basis on which they set their planned admission number must be fair and reasonable.

## Guidance on Permanent Exclusions

It is vital that exclusion panels undertake their responsibility for considering the reinstatement of permanently excluded pupils conscientiously with full regard to the relevant Statutory Guidance.

IPC's checklist for members of exclusion panels has been reworded and reformatted to encourage a rigorous and systematic approach - the updated guidance will be sent to panel members with invitations to hearings.

## Primary Assessment

The Standards and Testing Agency is awaiting final ministerial confirmation, but the intention is that there will be a full programme of primary assessments from September 2021 and leaders should plan on this basis.

The DfE has updated the Catch-Up Premium: Coronavirus guidance to provide information on carrying funding forward beyond this academic year, accountability arrangements (including what schools in trusts need to publish online), and plans for Ofsted monitoring during the Summer term.

Details of the inspection plans are available at [Ofsted: coronavirus \(COVID-19\) rolling update](#). As part of these inspections, inspectors may discuss plans schools have to spend their Catch-Up Premium funding.

## The Role of Trust Members

An update to the National Governance Association's (NGA) guidance offers trust members a way to "assure themselves of the remit and limitations of their role", whilst providing invaluable information for trust boards in reporting to members.

Members are "guardians of the governance of the trust" and act as "a last line of defence from failures of governance and failure to uphold the charitable purpose of the organisation". Their role is to satisfy themselves that the "standard of governance across the trust is high".

The updated guidance says members and the trustee boards must "remain committed to keeping the members' role discrete for it to fulfil its function", to prevent undermining the board - which is responsible for the core governance functions and conducting the business of the trust.

In choosing members, trusts should emphasise that "knowing what good governance looks like is the most essential requirement to be able to fulfil the member role". These include people who "possess a good understanding of the charitable aims of the organisation, and who are willing to take action if the need arises" - which the guidance says is of more value than various professional skills.

The updated guidance reinforces that "given members are the guardians of the governance of the trust, it is logical that they are different people to the trustees, for the simple reason that it is difficult to hold oneself to account".

## Mental Health Support Plans

As part of Mental Health Awareness Week, the DfE has outlined plans for £17.4 million funding for mental health initiatives in education settings. The funding will cover the following:-

- A Wellbeing for Education Recovery programme providing free training and resources for staff to support pupils experiencing additional pressures from the last year.
- Funding to the “Link” programme run by the Anna Freud Centre, which promotes joint working between schools and mental health services.
- Grants for the training of senior mental health leads in up to 7,800 schools and colleges from September.

In addition, the DfE and Ofsted have made 12 commitments to support staff wellbeing, including to review the impact of the Ofsted framework on staff wellbeing. The Education Staff Wellbeing Charter is intended to be a shared commitment across the sector to support staff, with schools and colleges invited to sign the charter in the Autumn.

## Governor Training

Introduction to Governance training will take place on Friday 25 June 2021 and individuals new to the role will be contacted separately.

## How to Contact Us

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