



# Governors Newsletter

## Useful Information for Barnsley School Governors

I hope you were able to take some time to rest over the festive period and are feeling prepared for the term ahead.



The spring term is a particularly busy period for schools and governing bodies. During this term, governors in LA-maintained schools are required to complete the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS). Further details about these requirements are included in this newsletter.

We have recently overhauled and are now ready to launch a revised model complaints procedure for LA Maintained schools. Further information about this can be found below and copies of the procedure will be circulated with governing body meeting papers this term. We strongly recommend that Governors adopt this updated procedure for their school.

Barnsley's schools are celebrating a landmark year, with educational outcomes in 2024-25 reaching new heights and placing the borough among the top performers nationally. The results for 2025 were recently released and reveal a story of continuous improvement, innovation, and collaboration across the region. Well done to all our schools and academies!

Please note that where information is shown in **blue text** within this newsletter, there is a link which can be clicked on to provide additional information.

Once again I'd like to thank you for your continued support and for the positive impact your work has on the education and life chances of Barnsley's children and young people.

Peter Bell: School Governance and Alliance Board Service Manager

## Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) (Local Authority Maintained Schools Only)

The [Schools Financial Value Standard](#) (SFVS) is a requirement for all **maintained schools**, including pupil referral units (PRUs), who must submit it to their local authority (LA) every year.

The SFVS helps maintained schools to:

- Manage their finances;
- Provide assurance to the LA that they meet the standards necessary to achieve good financial health and resource management.



The SFVS is **not required for academies**, but they do have other annual reporting obligations.

### Deadline

Local Authority Maintained schools must submit the SFVS (signed by your chair of governors) to the LA before the end of the financial year (as per section 4.16 of the [statutory guidance](#) on schemes for financing schools).

For the financial year 2025-26, your school should submit its SFVS no later than **31 March 2026**.

### Summary of the SFVS Sections

There are 2 sections:

- **Introduction and outcomes** – the chair of the governing body will need to sign this page;
- **Checklist** – made up of **30** questions. Schools answer these to assure their LA that resources are managed effectively.



All governors should read the answers in the checklist – this is because the full Governing Body should agree on them before the chair signs the SFVS.

### Finance Benchmarking and Insights Tool

This service helps schools view and improve their spending. Anyone can use it to compare schools, academies or trusts across England. You can also download data and findings to use in reports.

### At a school level \*

You can:

- see how spending compares with similar schools
- enter your own data to see how it affects the benchmarking position
- plan school curriculum finances
- see tailored commercial recommendations for each school based on data

\* It may be worth contacting your Headteacher or School Business Manager to ask for this information.

Click [here](#) to access the benchmarking tool.

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### **BMBC: Revised Model Complaints Procedure (LA Maintained Schools Only)**

We have recently updated the Model Complaints Procedure for schools and details of this will be circulated with your Spring Term Governing Body meeting agenda.



With the increased use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) being used by complainants as a tool to draft school related complaints, the updated procedure now permits schools to ask complainants to clarify or re-present their concern or complaint where AI use is suspected. This may include asking the complainant to:

- Clearly separate the concern or complaint into individual points.
- Explain how any referenced legislation applies to their specific concern or complaint.
- Use clear and concise language.
- Provide relevant dated evidence, rather than general statements.
- Outline, where appropriate, the outcome they are seeking.

This approach will help the school to understand and deal with the complainants concern or complaint in a timely manner.



There will also be no more automatic right for a complainant to escalate their complaint to a meeting with a panel of governors, as per the previous procedure. If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of their formal complaint at Stage 2, they may request an independent review via a panel of school governors. This request must clearly outline the complainant's reasons for seeking a review and explain why they believe the complaint remains unresolved.

The panel will meet to carefully consider the request for a review and determine the appropriate course of action, which may include:

1. No Valid Grounds for Review.
2. Reinvestigation of Complaint:
  - i. The panel may decide to reinvestigate some or all aspects of the complaint process. They will assess the grounds for an independent review and decide whether a formal hearing is necessary. If a formal hearing is required, this will be communicated to the complainant within 15 school days, offering a suggested date(s) and venue for the formal hearing. After the formal hearing, an outcome letter will be sent to the complainant within 5 school days.

- ii. If a formal hearing is not required, the panel will make a decision and communicate it to the complainant through a review outcome letter within 15 school days of the complainants request for an Independent Review.
3. Mediation: arrangements for this to be determined by the panel.

We strongly recommend that Governors adopt this updated procedure. School Governor Services will be also be able to advise and support schools on using this procedure, if adopted.

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### **Governor School Visits: BMBC Model Policy**

We have recently updated the Governor School Visits: Model Policy for schools and details of this will be circulated with your Spring Term Governing Body meeting agenda.



A clear Governor School Visits Policy is an important part of effective school governance. It helps ensure that any visit undertaken by a governor is purposeful, well-planned, and aligned with the strategic role of the governing body. It also supports governors in gaining a better understanding of the school's work, including the curriculum, learning environment, and pupils' experiences. This insight strengthens governors' ability to make informed decisions and to monitor progress against school priorities.

The policy also helps build positive, professional relationships between governors and school staff. By setting out expectations around conduct, communication, and the focus of visits, it ensures that visits feel supportive rather than intrusive. Staff can be confident about the purpose of each visit, and governors can engage with the school in a consistent and constructive way.

Finally, a visits policy encourages consistency across the governing body. It provides a standard approach to planning, carrying out, and reporting on visits, enabling the governing body to gather meaningful information over time. This supports effective governance and reinforces the governing body's commitment to understanding and celebrating the work of the school.

We strongly recommend that Governors adopt this updated procedure.

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### **Barnsley Schools Celebrate Record-Breaking Year in Education**

Barnsley's schools are celebrating a landmark year, with educational outcomes reaching new heights and placing the borough among the top performers nationally.



The latest results for 2025 were recently released and reveal a story of continuous improvement, innovation, and collaboration across the region.

**Early Reading Excellence** Primary schools across Barnsley maintain a sharp focus on early reading. For the third year running, Barnsley ranks in the top three local authorities nationwide for Year 1 phonics screening. Disadvantaged pupils have excelled, achieving well above the national average; a testament to the borough's targeted support and commitment to closing the attainment gap.

**Multiplication Mastery** Barnsley's collective focus on numeracy has paid off. The borough now leads the country in the proportion of pupils achieving full marks on the Year 4 Multiplication Table Check and ranks second nationally for average pupil score. This remarkable achievement reflects the dedication of educators and the effectiveness of local strategies since the test's introduction in 2022.

**Key Stage 2 Success SATs** By the end of Key Stage 2, Barnsley pupils are outperforming the national average in reading, writing, and mathematics. While most students meet expected standards, the next challenge is to boost numbers reaching the higher standard goal set to be driven and embedded by the Barnsley Schools' Alliance CPD sub-group.



**Key Stage 4 GCSEs and Key Stage 5 A-Level Improvements** At Key Stage 4 (GCSEs), outcomes have improved across all key measures, with Barnsley showing significant progress compared to national, regional, and statistical neighbours. At Key Stage 5 (A Levels), local pupils perform in line with peers across Yorkshire and Humber, and Barnsley stands out for the percentage of students achieving at least two A-levels. Notably, male and SEND pupils delivered especially strong results this time.

**Strategic Vision for the Future** The Barnsley Schools' Alliance Education Improvement Strategy, developed in collaboration with the sector, will guide and drive the borough's strategic priorities through to 2028, ensuring continued focus and progress. Barnsley's

educational community has much to celebrate, and with a clear strategy in place, the borough is poised to build on these successes in the years ahead.



## GovernorHub: AI Assistant and Document Picker

30 January 2026 11.00 – 11.30am

Join Jane Lowe, from the GovernorHub customer success team, for a quick tour of GovernorHub's AI assistant where she will be demonstrating how you can use it to support governance across your governing body.



Jane will show you:

- How to get instant answers from the GovernorHub knowledge bank;
- How to save time preparing for meetings and visits;
- New: document picker feature;
- Use cases to help you and your governing body govern more effectively.

Plus, there will be time to ask any questions. [Book your place here](#)

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## National School Governors Awareness Day 2026

‘Making a difference in 2026 - the power of governance’ - Thursday 12 February 2026.

With a host of free online sessions throughout the day for governors and trustees who are new to role, and those who are more experienced. At 6.00pm Steve Barker and Mel Stokes from the National Association of Governance Advisory Services (NAGAS) will be hosting a session on the wellbeing of governors and trustees.



Drawing on insights from NAGAS members, it will explore the growing pressures facing governors, from complex complaints and rising suspensions and exclusions to financial constraints and wider system challenges. The session will focus on practical, realistic strategies to help reduce workload pressures and support personal wellbeing, and will offer a preview of NAGAS’s upcoming Wellbeing and Workload Toolkit for governance, due to launch later in the Spring term.

[Explore the programme for the day](#)

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## National Introduction of Ofsted inspection in multi-academy trusts

Currently Ofsted inspect individual academies within a trust and may provide a summary evaluation of a trust (MATSE) where multiple schools within a trust are batch inspected. These inspections do not currently consider the way the central team within the MAT supports their schools.

The proposed new inspections, to be introduced through an amendment to the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill, will provide independent scrutiny at trust level. The inspections will focus on ‘leadership, governance and impact – including how effectively trusts improve schools, provide high quality education, support staff, use resources and promote pupil wellbeing. The approach will celebrate excellence, support improvement and recognise trusts

that play a wider system role by helping all children and schools across communities to succeed.’ Alongside inspection the amendments to the Bill will also introduce additional powers of intervention if a MAT is found to not be meeting acceptable standards.



There is no detail, as yet, on what the inspection will involve, the frequency of inspections or the format for inspection reports. A new inspection framework will be devised, including engaging with the sector to seek their views, prior to the proposed launch in 2027/28 academic year, with pilots conducted prior to that date.

[DfE press release](#)

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### **'Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools': New DfE Guidance effective from 1 April 2026**

From 1 April 2026, new statutory guidance titled 'Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools' replaces the current 'Use of reasonable force' guidance.

Under the new guidance governing bodies will have enhanced responsibilities. The DfE states that the new guidance provides clarification on the use of force: To help school staff feel more confident about using reasonable force when they feel it is necessary To make clear the responsibilities of school leaders and governing bodies in respect of this power. Under the April 2026 guidance all significant incidents involving reasonable force or seclusion must be recorded and reported to parents. This will become a legal requirement, rather than just best practice.

Schools will need to have a specific policy covering the circumstances for the use of restrictive interventions, the recording and reporting processes, their de-escalation strategies and SEND considerations which will be made. Governing bodies must approve, publish, and review this policy.

The review cycle is not stipulated, but it would seem sensible to review this new policy in line with the school behaviour policy. Governing bodies must monitor incident data to identify any patterns leading to interventions being needed, inform staff training needs and prevention strategies and ensure compliance and equity for all pupils. The use of seclusion is explicitly regulated and must only be used for the safety of the pupil, never as a punishment. Any use of seclusion must be recorded and reported.

Governing bodies must also monitor the impact for SEND pupils, so practices do not disproportionately affect pupils with SEND and ensure that reasonable adjustments are embedded in both policy and practice. Additionally, governing bodies are responsible for ensuring that staff receive training in de-escalation techniques and safe interventions, alongside the use of preventative strategies.

[The new guidance](#) has been published early to allow schools and governing bodies time to prepare.



## South Yorkshire Boys Impact Conference

On 12 February 2026, Sheffield Hallam will be hosting the first Boys Impact Conference for South Yorkshire. This is an important step for the region as the organisation comes together as part of its commitment to improving outcomes for boys and young men eligible for free school meals.

This work contributes to the national [Boys Impact movement](#) and invitations are extended to anyone across South Yorkshire who works with these young men, from any sector (education, health, housing etc). Attendance is free and lunch will be provided.

Sign up details and more information can be accessed from the form [here](#).

Spaces for the event are limited so please book early.

