

Dear Governors and Governance Professionals,

Welcome back from your summer break

As we step into the new academic year you will no doubt be considering your priorities and work plans for the year ahead. In this letter we would like to give you some important reminders as well as letting you know about updates to our BESST Services for Governors and Schools, and some key dates for your diaries.

Keeping Children Safe in Education – Action Required

As always, safeguarding remains our number one priority for all schools across Buckinghamshire and so I would like to remind you all that there is an updated version of Keeping Children Safe in Education. All governors should read this document and ensure that you understand the responsibilities you have. Please note there are references to the importance of teaching safeguarding to pupils, with schools required to deliver high quality, planned and timetabled Relationships/Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (pages 33,34 & 35). In addition, using the taught curriculum is key to addressing sexual harassment and abuse and to call out negative gender narratives.

The document can be found [here](#).

BESST Governor Services on Governor Hub

BESST are now a re-seller of Governor Hub. For schools who have purchased full board Governor Hub membership through BESST, your account will shortly switch over to BESST and you will receive separate communications about this.

Chairs of Governors and Headteachers of maintained schools in Bucks will soon receive a form requesting permission to add your school to the BESST Governor Services area on Governor Hub. This will enable us to communicate with your governors directly via Governor Hub, even though you have not purchased Full Board membership via BESST. Please look out for the separate communications on this.

If your school is an academy and has not purchased Full Board Membership of Governor Hub through BESST then you will not yet be able to access the BESST service area of Governor Hub. We plan to continue to work on this and will provide further updates in due course, but in the meantime, all information about BESST training and resources to support you in your role are available on the [BESST](#) and [Governor Zone](#) pages on Schools Web.

Resources for Governors – For information

Over the summer break we have started updating our resources for governors. These are published in the [Governor Zone on Schools Web](#), and we will also include links within the BESST area of Governor Hub when it goes live, so that they are easier for you to find.

I would especially draw your attention to the [New Governor Guide](#) which is full of useful information to support your boards in inducting new members.

We will continue to update information in Governor Zone and Governor Hub over the next few months.

BESST Governor Training – Available to Purchase

As part of Buckinghamshire Council, BESST is uniquely placed to offer a wide range of locally focused governor training services. Our courses are delivered by local experts who care passionately about providing cost effective, flexible and high-quality support to meet the needs of Buckinghamshire schools. BESST Governor Training can be purchased on a pay as you go basis or by signing up to a gold, silver or bronze package through [BESST](#) (Bursar log in required).

This term's topics include a selection of introductory level courses that will be especially relevant to new governors. There are also some free sessions, so do make sure you look to see what may be suitable for your board. You can see the full training catalogue and book onto courses on the [BESST website](#).

The Key for School Governors, School Leaders & The Safeguarding Training Centre – Available to Purchase

We are pleased to announce BESST is now a re-seller of The Key for School Governors, The Key for School Leaders and The Safeguarding Training Centre from The Key. These are online repositories full of excellent resources and tools to support school governors and school leaders in all aspects of their roles. Schools can purchase membership via [BESST](#) (Bursar log in required).

- The Key for School Governors through BESST is only available to schools that purchase Full Board Governor Hub Membership through BESST.
- The Key for School Leaders and The Key Safeguarding Training Centre are available only as a combined package.

NGA Membership & Learning Link Renewals – Available to Purchase

If your school has already purchased a membership to the NGA for 22/23 through BESST, this is now live. Existing log in details will remain unchanged.

If your school has not yet purchased a 22/23 membership of the NGA and/or Learning Link through the online shop, then any previous 21/22 NGA membership purchased through Buckinghamshire Council will expire this month. Thereafter, governors will not be able to access the members-only content from the NGA.

If you would like to benefit from NGA membership in 2022/23, you can sign up through BESST (bursar log in required). More information is available [here](#).

Headteacher Performance Management – Available to purchase

During the autumn term governing boards will be undertaking headteacher performance management, and we encourage governors who are involved in this process to consider joining the BESST Headteacher Performance Management course on 27th September.

We are offering experienced external advisor support to governing bodies through BESST. The external advisor role provides advise on the legal process, helps interpret data and other performance information and advises on how to frame Headteacher objectives for the coming year. Please click here to visit the [BESST](#) website for more information.

Side By Side – The role of governors

All headteachers and chairs of governors will have received a letter from School Improvement at the end of last academic year, detailing their school's Side by Side category and the associated support available to your school or academy during 2022/23.

Please find attached a copy of the Side by Side offer for 2022/23. We would like to draw your attention to the section on Side by Side Governor Involvement, copied below:

The Governing Body has a crucial part to play in school improvement through engagement with the process and through holding school leaders to account for improving standards for all pupils and students at their school. The governors, through discussion with their Headteacher, will set the ethos, culture and values of the school and collaboratively develop strategies and plans which will lead to greater success. Once agreement has been made to accept or commission Side by Side support, there is an expectation that school leaders will involve the Chair of Governors or other relevant governors in discussions with School Improvement Advisors. Headline Visits Notes will be shared with the Chair of Governors as part of the strategic overview of School Improvement; appropriate updates, which exclude detail at an identifiable staff level, should be provided to the Full Governing Board at each Governor Board Meeting.

The Buckinghamshire Challenge

For Chairs of Governors of all schools that participate in the Buckinghamshire Challenge, please look out for a letter coming soon which will give an update to participating governing boards on the plans for this second and final year of the challenge programme. We would be grateful for that update on the Buckinghamshire Challenge being cascaded to governors e.g. as an agenda item on full governing board meetings at those participating schools.

School Governance Consultative Board – For information

We are pleased to welcome Ali Duffield and Mandy Lewis to the School Governance Consultative Board as representatives for governors of the Wycombe area. The board has no further current vacancies for governor representatives at present. The board is newly chaired by Andrew Brown, Chair of Governors at Chiltern Hills Academy, who we welcome to the role. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the previous chair, Peter Lerner, for his work on the board.

Upcoming Dates for Your Diary

Corporate Director Briefings (Free)

For Chairs of Governors, Governor Clerks and Headteachers only

Friday 9th September, 9.30 - 11am at Aylesbury Rugby Club, Weston Turville - [Book Here](#).

Please note that entry to the session at the Aylesbury Rugby Club on Friday 9th September is by registration only. Please ensure you have booked a place and have received a confirmation from Eventbrite at least 24 hours before the event.

An opportunity for Buckinghamshire Headteachers, Chairs of Governors, and Governor Clerks to hear key strategic updates. Led by John Macilwraith, the new Director of Children's Services, this meeting will include:

- Updates on national and local issues
- Children's Services Ofsted improvement
- The continued development of Side by Side, as a school-led model of school improvement
- Buckinghamshire Council service updates
- Statutory updates for Headteachers and Governors

Governors' Priorities for the Autumn Term (Free)

For Chairs of Governors and Governor Clerks

Tuesday 13th September, 6.30-7.30pm on Teams – [Book Here](#)

A key date for your diary, this free briefing session for Chairs of Governors and Governance Professionals (clerks, advisors), will support you in considering your governing boards' priorities. Led by Paul Randall and Anne Sheddick from the BASG together with Yvette Thomas, School Improvement and Traded Services Manager at Buckinghamshire Council,

this briefing will focus on the needs of governing boards in Buckinghamshire and include updates from the DfE, NGA and the Local Authority.

BESST Governor Training Topics – Autumn Term 1 - [Book Here](#)

- Safeguarding in Schools – An Introduction for Governors
- The role of the Chair and Succession Planning
- Managing Head Teachers' Performance
- An Introduction to Finance in Maintained Schools for Governors
- Building an Effective Board – A Guide for Development Governors
- Promoting Pupil Wellbeing
- The role of the safeguarding governors in an Ofsted inspection
- Strategic Financial Management for Maintained School Governors
- Being Strategic, What Good Governance Looks Like

Finally, thank you for your continued efforts in supporting the children, young people and staff in Buckinghamshire schools; we appreciate the vital role that you play and welcome your feedback on the support available to you through BESST. We are continuing to build our support for governors over the coming months and look forward to working with you more closely in doing so.

Yours Sincerely,

Gareth Drawmer
Head of Achievement and Learning – Childrens Services