



Buckinghamshire Education  
School Support & Training  
(BESST)

## BESST Newsletter for Governors – January 2023

### Happy New Year!

We hope you have had an enjoyable festive break and wish you a happy new year. We hope to see you soon at a BESST event, the first of which is the free Governor Priorities session and presentation by the NGA (National Governance Association) on 10<sup>th</sup> January for Chairs of Governors and Governance Professionals ([Book here](#)).

### NGA presentation for Buckinghamshire Chairs of Governors and Governance Professionals

We are delighted that Jackie Sweeting, NGA Regional Lead for the South East, will join the Governor Priorities Briefing Session on 10<sup>th</sup> January. This session is free for Buckinghamshire Chairs of Governors and clerks to attend and is co-presented with Buckinghamshire Council School Improvement team and Buckinghamshire Association of School Governors. At the end of the usual priorities' session, Jackie will give a short presentation about topical issues in governance and guidance on making the most of NGA membership. Book your free place on the [BESST website](#).

### Is your school a great place to work? How do you know?

Recruitment, retention, budgets, and workplace stress are all very real challenges for many schools. Creating a positive working culture, underpinned by excellent leadership, is key to supporting staff-wellbeing and in turn to retaining staff and achieving positive pupil outcomes.

As governors it is important to reflect on the culture of wellbeing that exists in your school and ensure that you understand how it feels to work in your school. Your school's culture should demonstrate an overriding concern for the wellbeing of the school community and should not accept norms of high stress or ongoing excessive workloads. Governors have a direct responsibility to support the wellbeing of the executive leader, by limiting unnecessary stress, challenging excessive working hours, and promoting a healthy work-life balance.

*Supporting schools to get the best outcomes for every child*



But what does all this mean in tangible terms for governing boards? Here some things for you to consider:

1. **Do you have proactive conversations with leaders about their well-being and work life balance, and encourage middle leaders to do the same with the staff they manage?** This will help to create a culture where it is ok to speak up about challenges such as workloads, well-being and access to the tools and resources needed to do their jobs well.
2. **Do you empower leaders to work flexibly and support flexible working in your wider workforce?** Supporting flexible working arrangements that are workable for the school as well as the individual employee can enable your school to retain staff and promote a positive work-life balance.
3. **Does your school have mechanisms in place for staff feedback?** This may be using 360 feedback as an improvement tool, staff surveys and regular one to ones between staff and their line managers. When using staff surveys, make sure you are measuring data that enables you to monitor your schools people priorities, aligned to your people strategy / plan, such as leadership, workplace culture, professional development, staff engagement and well-being.
4. **Does your school or trust have a written People Strategy or People Plan that identifies your priorities in relation to your workforce?** People are your greatest asset - your biggest resource, biggest cost, and biggest impact for your pupils; And yet, most schools do not have a written people strategy or plan that looks beyond one year. A people plan should enable you to set out your vision for how it feels to work in your school, and the steps required to achieve this vision. Having such a plan can enable your board to understand what workforce data you need to measure and monitor for your own school's context, and subsequently to prioritise your efforts.

Don't forget to make good use of the governance subscriptions your school has purchased! Both the NGA and The Key have some excellent resources available to subscribing boards, to support governing boards in defining their wellbeing strategies, gaining feedback from staff, defining a wellbeing action plan and role modelling positive wellbeing through school leaders.

## Appointing an Executive Leader

The spring term is the most common time for governing boards to undertake recruitment and selection activity to appoint a new executive leader. If you find yourself in this situation, hopefully it won't have come as a surprise, and you will have already been considering succession planning for the school's leadership arrangements. Whether expected or not, recruiting a headteacher is arguably one of the most important tasks a governing board will undertake.

It is essential for boards to have recruitment processes in place that will enable them to attract and recruit the right executive leader for their school. It is critical that a professional, fair, open, and time-sensitive recruitment practice is undertaken, taking onboard the latest safeguarding guidance and legislation to ensure a successful recruitment outcome.

If you are preparing to appoint an executive leader, you must ensure that at least one governor has Safer Recruitment training, and you may benefit from at least one governor (if not, more) attending training from BESST on **Appointing an Executive Leader on 2<sup>nd</sup> February** ([Book here](#)). You can complete Safer Recruitment online through other providers, or you can join Buckinghamshire Council HR teams **Safer Recruitment Training on 20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> March** ([Book here](#)).

Additionally, the BESST School Improvement Team and Buckinghamshire Council Human Resources Team can offer three different **traded packages of support** including pre and post interview HR support, reviewing applications, supporting shortlisting, and attending interview days. To find out more, visit the [BESST website](#).

## Governor Training and events

The BESST spring term training schedule is below. All BESST courses are delivered by officers from Buckinghamshire Council, meaning governors hear from local experts who understand the local context for Bucks schools. Visit the [BESST website](#) to book your place.

Session Title	Date
<b>Governor Priorities for the Spring Term (FREE)</b>	10.01.23
<b>Building Effective Relationships with your School Leadership Team</b>	12.01.23
<b>Financial Control and Fraud Awareness</b>	17.01.23
<b>Overseeing Educational Visits, the Governor's Role</b>	19.01.23
<b>The Governing Board's role in Overseeing SEND</b>	24.01.23
<b>Allegations - A Guide for Governors</b>	31.01.23
<b>Appointing an Executive Leader – A Guide for Governors</b>	02.02.23
<b>Being Strategic, What Good Governance Looks Like</b>	07.02.23
<b>Trauma Informed and Attachment Aware Schools (FREE)</b>	21.02.23
<b>Drop-in for New Governors (FREE)</b>	23.02.23
<b>Exclusions and Reintegration - A governor's guide</b>	28.02.23
<b>Safeguarding in Schools - An Introduction for Governors (FREE)</b>	02.03.23
<b>Championing High Quality PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) - The Role of the PSHE Governor</b>	09.03.23
<b>Preparing for an Ofsted Inspection – A Guide for Governors</b>	21.03.23
<b>Setting the Culture, Values and Ethos for your School</b>	23.03.23

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## About BESST

BESST is the traded school improvement and governor support service from Buckinghamshire Council. Led by our experienced team, BESST services will enable school leaders to keep up to date and support the implementation of best practice across Buckinghamshire. Our services will continue to develop in the coming months based on feedback from school leaders and governors.



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Please see [BESST](#) online for more details of our training courses and services.