


# Be Connected (schools and academy trusts): October 2024

03 October 2024  Nick MacKenzie

Welcome to the first edition of Be Connected for the 2024-25 academic year. As always, this issue is packed with the latest legal updates, sector insights, expert advice and guidance from our dedicated team of education lawyers and HR consultants.

## Sector developments

### Ofsted and intervention changes

The start of the academic year brought with it some significant developments regarding changes to inspection. This included:

- The publication of Dame Christine Gilbert's independent learning review commissioned by Ofsted and Ofsted's response to the independent learning review.
- Ofsted's findings from its 'Big Listen' consultation.
- Government policy announcements regarding Ofsted inspection, including single headline judgements being scrapped with immediate effect.
- Associated changes to key documents and guidance include updates to Ofsted's code of conduct and their school inspection and school monitoring handbooks.

Our briefing pulls out some key areas which we know have prompted questions from school and trusts.

[Read more](#) →

### School exclusions and suspensions reach record high

The Department for Education (DfE) published exclusion and suspension data for the 22/23 academic year this summer, which revealed both suspensions and exclusions hit their highest number on record. Headline statistics include primary school exclusions increasing by 58% and secondary school suspensions rising by 38%.

The DfE also produces data on Independent Review Panel (IRP) decisions, where parents are challenging exclusion decisions. The number of IRPs increased 40% but the number of exclusions being upheld by IRPs was only 0.6%, significantly different to the previous year at 58.9%.

[Find out more](#) →

### What the UK Covid-19 Inquiry means for schools

The UK Covid-19 Inquiry was set up to examine the UK's response to and the impact arising out of the Covid-19 pandemic. The latest module relates to children and young people and will have implications for staff working in schools and trusts.

We provide guidance on what you need to know, including what to do if you think you have valuable information which the Inquiry needs to know, and what to do if you're approached by the Inquiry in relation to a request for documents or a witness statement.

[Read more](#) →

## Rebuilding trust and community: A guide for schools after the recent UK riots

Over the summer, riots in the UK affected communities across the country. For schools there will be important steps to take as students and staff return for the new academic year.

Our advice to schools is to be proactive in addressing the needs of your school community. The aim is to create a safe and supportive environment, rebuild trust and foster a sense of community.

School leaders will know how best to encourage open communication in your setting, promote resilience and whether additional support is required. We provide some recommendations and advice to help you rebuild trust in your community.

[Find out more](#) →

## Share your thoughts on the changing shape of the education sector

We're inviting the leaders of the nation's schools and academies to share views in our bi-annual School Leaders Survey. We're keen to capture and share insight on the evolving policy landscape following the change in government and any shifts in strategic priorities for schools and trusts.

The latest edition of the survey remains tightly focused and easy for you to respond to, taking only 10 minutes to complete. Yet, we've managed to provide the opportunity for a deeper dive into key challenges such as SEND support and to explore the opportunities and risks posed by AI.

You can check out results from past editions here, which represent over 1,800 schools nationally. We're keen to make this edition even more representative, so, please share your experience to help give us all a clearer picture of how things are changing this 2024-25 academic year.

[Have your say](#) →

## Legal and regulatory updates

### Raising standards with an updated Academy Trust Handbook

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) has published the latest edition of the Academy Trust Handbook, which is now in effect and is unaffected by the recent announcement that the ESFA is set to close.

As anyone involved in the academy sector will know, the Academy Trust Handbook, in conjunction with the Academies Accounts Direction is an integral part of the regulatory framework for those who have responsibility for governing, managing or auditing an academy trust.

[Find out more](#) →

## Transgender and gender questioning guidance

In December 2023, the Department for Education (DfE) released draft non-statutory gender questioning guidance for schools for the purpose of a consultation. That consultation concluded in March 2024 but due to the election no final version of the guidance was released.

We understand that the DfE received a significant number of responses, and it would have taken some time for these to be considered. Since the draft guidance was issued, the Cass Report made recommendations on transgender children, aimed at the NHS, which struck a slightly different tone.

It is unclear when we can expect any final guidance to be released and how it may change. In the meantime, you do not need follow the draft guidance as it was never finalised, and if guidance is released, it may be substantially different from the original draft.

[Find out more](#) →

## Procurement act implementation delayed

The implementation date of the Procurement Act 2023 has been delayed by four months, the government has announced. Initially planned for 28 October 2024, the Act will now come into force on 24 February 2025.

In a ministerial statement published online, the Cabinet Office said the delay will allow time for a new National Procurement Policy Statement to be produced. Marking a significant departure from EU-derived laws, the Act, which received royal assent on 26 October 2023, marks a transformational shift in regulating how the public sector purchases goods and services.

A four-month delay gives much-needed breathing space so we recommend that trusts use this extra time to ensure they are up to speed on the new regulations and have everything in place for 24 February next year. Check out our free, on demand webinar to find out how you can make the most of this reprieve and prepare for the new legislation coming into force.

[Access the webinar now](#) →

## Changes to attendance requirements for schools

The DfE recently released their updated guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance' which outlines significant changes to the attendance and registration requirements for schools for this academic year.

To help you get up to speed we've published a series of articles offering support, we're offering bespoke training and we're also hosting a free webinar to help you to understand and implement these changes this term.

- [Understanding the changes to attendance requirements](#)
- [Implementing the new attendance monitoring requirements](#)
- [The latest penalties for school non-attendance](#)
- [School attendance and absence management training](#)
- [School attendance - getting to grips with the new regulations](#) [free webinar]

[Access the webinar now](#) →

## Employment

### What new employment law means for schools and academy trusts

With some significant changes to employment law proposed by the new government, employment lawyers Heather Mitchell and Polly O'Malley explore what this will mean for schools and trusts and advise you on how you can prepare. This webinar is free to attend.

[Register now](#) →

### Managing safeguarding allegations against staff

Join us for this online session where you can hear from our employment lawyers and HR experts on the options and next steps available to employers when they receive safeguarding allegations - particularly criminal allegations - about a member of staff. This webinar is free to attend.

[Register now](#) →

### Executive pay: managing dilemmas and meeting obligations

Get the support you and your trustees need with the executive pay setting processes to meet the obligations and expectations within the latest iteration of the Academy Trust Handbook.

Working with so many different trusts has enabled us to develop our advice and methodology, build on our deep understanding of school trusts, our knowledge of the sector and, crucially, the regulator's expectations. This means that our clients receive a service that delivers a best-practice approach to executive pay setting.

[Find out more](#) →

# Learning and development

## Leadership insights from sector influencers

Our #EdInfluence podcast is back this year for its fourth series and will again feature some very special guests and valuable leadership insight from across the sector and beyond.

Hosted by our head of education and executive coach Nick MacKenzie, the first episode of this series features Cathie Paine, Chief Executive Officer of REAch2 Academy Trust. Cathie joined REAch2 in 2012 when there were just four schools in the Trust. It's now the largest primary-only Trust in the country, supporting 62 primary academies across England.

Ever since Cathie's first headship taking a socially deprived school from 'special measures' to 'Good' in just four terms, she's consistently demonstrated her passion for enabling children to flourish in an environment of outstanding practice.

You can access the podcast to hear more from Cathie and subscribe to future episodes via your preferred podcast channel.

[Listen now](#) →

## Training and CPD opportunities

All our interactive online training programmes have been updated for 2024-25 and we have places available on the new training cohorts starting this academic year. Places are limited and courses tend to book up quickly, especially as we now offer group booking discounts, so it's worth registering now to secure your place.

### CPD for school leaders on the Equality Act

This brand-new offering for 2025 is designed to give you the knowledge and confidence to understand your legal responsibilities and make informed decisions on equality issues, helping you to effectively support pupils with protected characteristics.

[Find out more](#) →

### School attendance and absence management training

Make sure your team are up to date and can confidently meet the latest requirements for monitoring and managing attendance in schools. Our expert team provide bespoke training for your school or trust on pupil attendance and absence management.

[Find out more](#) →

### Managing parental complaints

For school and trust leaders and their teams to gain the skills, knowledge and confidence to effectively manage parental complaints.

[Find out more](#) →

### HR Pathway

Designed for newly appointed head teachers, school leaders and managers or those aspiring to move into a school leadership. The programme will help you get people management right.

[Find out more](#) →

### Data Protection Officer CPD

Our Data Protection Officer (DPO) CPD programmes provide school and trust DPOs with all they need to keep their knowledge up to date throughout the academic year.

[Find out more](#) →

## Safeguarding training

This safeguarding course is designed specifically for governors and trustees, with an extended version for leads. It steers away from operational safeguarding matters and instead focuses on strategic safeguarding and good safeguarding governance, meeting the latest requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

[Governors and trustees](#) →

[Lead safeguarding governors and trustees](#) →

## Meeting compliance requirements for the new academic year

Make sure your staff are up to date and demonstrate your school is compliant in key areas such as safeguarding, data protection, cyber security, and more with EduCompli.

Developed by our education lawyers in partnership with E3, our online compliance training is fun, engaging and built around our experiences of advising schools and trusts. Staff can access the training anytime, anywhere and on any device, all in one easy app.

You can experience EduCompli for yourself by registering for a free trial.

[Find out more](#) →

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