

# Be Connected: Schools and academy trusts

## February 2025

06 February 2025  Nick MacKenzie

Welcome to Be Connected for schools and academy trusts.

This issue explores the implications of the new Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, as well as being packed with the latest legal updates, sector insights, expert advice and guidance from our dedicated team of education lawyers and HR consultants.

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## Sector and policy developments

### Education predictions: What does 2025 have in store for schools and academy trusts?

From a new Ofsted inspection framework to updated safeguarding guidance, plenty of change is anticipated across the sector in 2025.

Alongside government intervention, which may also address issues such as 'missing' children in the education system and insufficient provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities, schools and academy trusts must also be aware of increased scrutiny in their data compliance.

[Our team provide their predictions](#) →

### School leaders share their views on policy, AI and SEND

The findings of our latest School Leaders Survey provide valuable insight on a range of key policy issues as well as challenges and priorities of the day, including detailed exploration of two key issues for the sector; artificial intelligence and SEND.

Research for this survey was carried out during October 2024 during the weeks which marked the conclusion of the Labour government's first 100 days in office. Responses show a marked shift in the picture painted of school leaders' views around key government policy areas, from widespread dissatisfaction to a position of neutrality.

[Find out more](#) →

### Legal views on the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill was introduced in the House of Commons just before Christmas and is now making its way through Parliament. It's the new government's first major piece of legislation relating to schools, and it also covers children's social care, partly building on the previous government's social care reform strategy.

Following [our initial comments on the announcement of the Bill](#) we've delved deeper and produced this series of briefings on what schools need to know about what the Bill means for key areas including:

- [Academies: freedoms and interventions.](#)
- [Admissions.](#)
- [Attendance and children not in school.](#)
- [Breakfast clubs.](#)
- [School uniform.](#)
- [Independent educational institutions.](#)
- [Teacher pay and conditions.](#)
- [New schools.](#)
- [Teacher misconduct.](#)

We're here to support you and we'll provide further advice as these proposed laws are debated, and as we gain further clarity on the practical implications for schools and academy trusts.

[Find out more](#) →

## Legal and regulatory updates

### Are you ready for the new Procurement Act?

The Procurement Act 2023 comes into effect in a matter of weeks, on 24 February 2025. The Act brings significant changes to the way in which contracts are procured.

It's crucial that trusts prepare in advance to comply with the new rules when making purchases. If you haven't already, you'll need to update your policies and procedures in readiness, so that you can procure services compliantly.

That's where we can help. We've prepared a comprehensive suite of resources which will enable you to prepare, taking the hard work out of getting ready for procurement reform, saving you time and avoiding costly mistakes.

[Read more](#) →

### School exclusions case confirms 'substance over form' is key

Hot on the heels of the recently published case of R (LM) v an academy trust, two further cases on exclusions have been reported. This recent flurry of case law is helpful and to some extent expected, given the steep rise in suspensions and exclusions over the last year.

In RWU, R (on the application of) v a governing body of an academy [2024] EWHC 2828 the Claimant's Application for Judicial Review was dismissed on all four grounds, setting out some useful findings on how the courts will approach Claimants' criticisms of a school's exclusions process.

Schools should take comfort that the case confirms that courts are concerned with substance over form, and that minor procedural and administrative errors will not lead to a decision being quashed by the High Court.

[Read more](#) →

## Employment

### New rights to neonatal care leave and pay

The Neonatal Care (Leave and Pay) Act 2023 provides new rights for parents of a child receiving neonatal care to take time off and subject to certain conditions, pay.

Although the Act was passed in May 2023, the Regulations containing the details of how the entitlements will work in practice have only just been published. In this article we set out what employers need to know.

[Read more](#) →

## Preventing sexual harassment toolkit

The new Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2024 and accompanying EHRC technical guidance mark a game-changing shift in employer duties, demanding immediate action to prevent sexual harassment and protect staff.

Schools and trusts will need to take reasonable steps to prevent the sexual harassment of employees as employment tribunals now have the power to increase compensation for sexual harassment by up to 25%. Find out how we can help you to navigate the new law and protect your organisation and its employees from sexual harassment.

[Find out more](#) →

## Support and guidance

### How schools can avoid costly FOI mistakes

It was recently reported in the media that a school had inadvertently published a large amount of pupil data when responding to a Freedom of Information Act (FOI) request. In this article we explain what happened, the potential consequences of data breaches and how schools can avoid these pitfalls.

[Find out more](#) →

### Handling FOI requests and the Section 36 exemption

Schools and academies now receive an ever-increasing number of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, often in response to sensitive situations. Transparency is important but can severely hamper effective school business. How can schools respond?

[Access the guidance](#) →

### Gain educational leadership perspectives on the year ahead

Can the power of 'quiet diplomacy', greater community involvement, and evolved leadership help bridge the equity gap for pupils from varying socioeconomic backgrounds?

In the latest thought-provoking episode of our EdInfluence podcast, we hear the views of a diverse selection of leaders on the opportunities and challenges facing the sector for the year ahead, including Leora Cruddas CBE, the Chief Executive of the Confederation of School Trusts (CST), who shares her compelling journey and insights on educational leadership and community engagement.

Check out the podcast to hear from Leora and other leaders from across the sector and subscribe to future episodes via your preferred podcast channel.

[Listen now](#) →

## Events and training

### Have you registered for your free place at EdCon2025?

Join us this March for EdCon2025, our virtual conference designed to inspire and support those working in schools and academy trusts.

With four weeks of workshops, on-demand sessions, and expert-led discussions, this online event is designed to inspire and empower educators everywhere.

[Register now](#) →

### Handling parental complaints against staff: Panel discussion

Join us for an expert panel discussion, which explores the complex interrelationship between parent complaints, safeguarding obligations, and internal staff procedures, including disciplinary investigation.

[Register now](#) →

## Embracing AI in schools: Ensuring accountability, compliance and good governance

The education sector is at a crossroads with artificial intelligence (AI) integration, facing both opportunities for innovation and challenges in accountability, safety, and compliance. During this webinar we'll explore these issues, guiding school leaders to foster innovation and gain efficiencies from AI, while putting good governance at its heart.

[Watch now](#) →

## Training and CPD opportunities in March 2025

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 get booked up quickly, especially as we now offer group booking discounts, so it's worth registering now to secure your place.

### 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 to get people management right.

[Find out more](#)

### Data Protection Officer CPD: Advanced

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. (The next available cohort for the Foundation course is in September).

[Find out more](#)

### Trust Directors of Safeguarding CPD

This programme is for Directors of Safeguarding (and equivalent) in trusts, providing everything you need to continue developing excellence in trust safeguarding governance.

[Find out more](#)

## You may also be interested in...

### New hires will support schools with data compliance amid enhanced ICO scrutiny

We've bolstered our sector-leading data compliance team with two key appointments, hiring award-winning Claire Archibald as Legal Director and Bethany Paliga as a Senior Associate.

Working with Dai Durbridge, Partner, who leads the education data compliance team, they further strengthen our specialism in supporting schools and academies in data protection matters.

[Find out more](#) →

## In the media

- [KCSIE and ABE: The safeguarding disconnect affecting schools | Tes](#)

- [Children's privacy: The data watchdog warning schools need to hear | Tes](#)
- [Children's wellbeing and schools bill: the 15 key policies | Schools Week](#)
- [Schools need greater clarity on social media checks | Schools Week](#)
- [The Knowledge: School leaders' solutions to the SEND crisis | Schools Week](#)
- [SEND tribunals soar by 55% and almost all side with families | Schools Week](#)
- [UK: Two-thirds of school leaders dissatisfied with SEND guidance | EducationInvestor](#)
- [SEND Tribunal statistics - legal comment | Government & Public Sector Journal](#)

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