

New hires at Browne Jacobson will support schools with data compliance amid enhanced ICO scrutiny

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Browne Jacobson's market-leading education practice has bolstered its data compliance team with two key appointments.

The UK and Ireland law firm has hired award-winning [Claire Archibald](#) as Legal Director and [Bethany Paliga](#) as Senior Associate.

Working with Dai Durbridge, Partner, who leads the education data compliance team, they further strengthen the firm's specialism in supporting [schools and academies](#) in [data protection](#) matters.

Claire joins from The Education Data Hub at Derbyshire County Council, where she led a data protection officer (DPO) service that grew from a handful of clients to one of the leading providers of DPO services to schools.

Earlier this month, she won the Champion of the Year Award at the PICCASO (Privacy, InfoSec, Culture Change and Awareness Societal Organisation) Awards Europe, which recognises people making an outstanding contribution to the fast-growing data privacy sector.

Bethany, who was previously at Forbes Solicitors, brings extensive experience advising education clients on data protection and freedom of information law.

Claire and Bethany are based in Browne Jacobson's Manchester office.

Data compliance is becoming increasingly important within education, with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) reprimanding several schools for compliance failures. The regulator is placing enhanced scrutiny on children's privacy, subject access requests, artificial intelligence and biometrics.

Claire said:

"Supporting schools to get on the front foot when it comes to data protection compliance means they are less likely to experience organisational risk and stakeholder dissatisfaction, making their work less stressful.

"Our aim is for schools, and their stakeholders, to feel confident in their data protection compliance programmes. We're excited to bring this mission to the Browne Jacobson education team to ensure our services provide school staff and their DPOs with the expertise and resources to increase their knowledge and confidence."

Dai Durbridge, Partner leading on safeguarding and data protection at Browne Jacobson, said:

"With schools facing an ever-increasing burden from subject access requests, cyber-breach incidents, complaints and claims for damages from people affected by data breaches, there has never been a more crucial time for focusing on carrying out proactive work to ensure data protection compliance.

"Claire and Bethany will bring extra depth of knowledge and some innovative products and services to our education clients, ensuring they are prepared for challenge in the new digital, AI-driven world. Their energy and passion are infectious."

Nick MacKenzie, Head of [Education](#) at Browne Jacobson, added:

“Half of the respondents in our School Leaders Survey in spring 2024 said they faced challenges in recruiting people with sufficient expertise in data management and analysis, while only one in five schools believe they have sufficient expertise in artificial intelligence, a technology where data compliance will be crucial to its successful and ethical adoption.

“Strengthening our team of data compliance specialist lawyers will therefore supplement the wide range of expertise we can offer across the breadth of our education practice. This investment in our team ensures we continue to be recognised as a market leader, having maintained our Band 1 schools and academies rankings in every region for the Legal 500 directory and nationally in Chambers this year, and voted by The Times as one of its top three firms for education.”

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