


A policy in the sun

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As we approach the end of a particularly turbulent academic year, finding the time, energy and buy-in to review school policies may seem less likely than finding a holiday cottage in Cornwall for mid-August. However, as we regularly discuss with our clients, a clear and robust set of policies is a vital first step to getting compliance right. That advice is even more pertinent in a climate which has thrown schools and trusts repeated curveballs. Unfortunately, like a lot of things in life, compliance often becomes most important when we have the least time for it.

The summer term is actually a great time to review your policies for a few reasons:

1. **Live it, learn it, amend it** – there are clear benefits to carving out some time to take stock, and the close of an academic year is an ideal time to reflect on things that went well, near-misses and lessons learnt, both at a local level and taking into account wider circumstances. When we advise education settings on a legal problem, our aim is to not only address the issue at hand but also resolve how it may be avoided in the future. Simple changes to policies can often make a big difference. For example, perhaps your attendance policy didn't quite stand up to some of the unusual circumstances brought about by the pandemic; maybe you've been meaning to get round to strengthening your complaints procedure to cover off unreasonable parental conduct; or perhaps it crossed your mind that your safeguarding policy would benefit from review in light of Everyone's Invited.
2. **One step ahead** – in the education sector, September typically brings the introduction of new guidance, legislation and policy and we do not expect this year to be any different. A revised School Admissions Code, a new law around school-uniform affordability, and updated behaviour and exclusions guidance are just some examples of what we expect for the 2022 autumn term. Doing some groundwork now so that these changes can be discussed and reflected at the first board/committee meetings of the new academic year means you are not starting on the back-foot. [Our policy service](#) is a useful tool here too – subscribers automatically receive updated policies during the academic year when there have been key changes in law or guidance, meaning one less thing for you to think about.
3. **Progress not perfection** – building the point above, even if a detailed policy review isn't feasible, some basic housekeeping around policies can lay the foundations for a smooth, more detailed review next year. For example, we regularly see policies with a review date on the front cover which has long since expired. A simple audit of when all policies were last reviewed and which are overdue, listed by priority, can add some focus. We also often see multi-academy trusts relying on a mix of different policies, meaning there can be a disjointed approach to key areas such as health and safety or complaints. The exercise of identifying where consistency is required is another valuable initial step.

If your policies are in need of review and you would like some help with the heavy lifting, you may want to consider our policy service for academy trusts. We provide a suite of [40 education and HR policies](#) for a fixed fee, all drafted by our team of expert lawyers and HR consultants so you can be assured that they are compliant and reflect best-practice. You also have the option of signing up to our annual update service, meaning you will receive an updated set of policies every September incorporating any new or revised law, guidance or policy positions.

See you in Cornwall!

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