

Bolton Governance Services

Service Level Agreement 2023-24
Maintained Schools

(costs and return form separate)



Bolton Governance Services

Providing comprehensive support for Clerking, Training and Development



Bolton Governance Services

Maintained School Service Level Agreement – 2023-24

Bolton Governance Services provides quality and value for money services for governing and trust boards of authority-maintained schools, non-maintained schools and academy trusts. It is a tried and tested service that provides governance expertise to the majority of establishments within the Bolton area. The combined experience of the governance professionals in the service means that boards receive first class support in the modern world of education governance. Not only does the service provide effective organisation and administrative support, but more importantly, helps boards understand their strategic role, functions and legal duties through quality assured clerking, training and development services.

Governing and trust boards should demand high standards from their governance professionals, and this is why Bolton Governance Services has a commitment to provide access to officers that are fully trained in governance law and procedure and keep up to date with changes in the governance and educational landscape.

Clerking and Support Services



All governing and trust boards must appoint a clerk to the board. This role has changed significantly and has much greater prominence. The role should be undertaken by a suitably qualified, professional person who is capable of providing the detailed knowledge of governance procedure that governors and trustees require to operate within their core functions. Bolton Governance Services provides governance professionals that have undertaken the National Clerks Development Programme and thorough internal development.

Information, Support and Advice

Through the service you can expect:

- An information and advice service whereby governors, trustees and school leaders can email or telephone for guidance on governance procedure and law.
- A dedicated website for governance in Bolton (The Bolton Governance Services website) with regular e-briefings to all trustees and governors in order to provide guidance and information on matters concerning academy and school governance.
- Governance Surgeries to be provided on the last Friday of each calendar month to provide an opportunity for governors and trustees to talk to lead officers about individual matters of concern.
- Access to termly strategic Chairs' Briefing sessions free of charge and preferential rates for conferences and events.
- Good links with other teams and departments within the Local Authority as well as external partners such as the NGA (National Governance Association), NCOGS (National Co-ordinators of Governor Services) and local diocesan departments and can therefore act as an access point to other areas of expertise as appropriate.
- The promotion and facilitation of school to school support and networking including the sharing of good practice (whilst maintaining complete confidentiality, where appropriate) between the family of Bolton schools and academies.

Membership, Record Maintenance and Structures

Through the service you can expect:

- The maintenance of records and governance structures as well as governor and trustee attendances at meetings, monitor the application of regulations/articles on non-attendance, and, where appropriate, write to non-attending governors and trustees.
- New governors and trustees to be notified of their appointment and be provided with a copy of the 'Welcome to Governance' pack and other relevant induction material.
- New chairs of governing and trust boards to receive an introductory pack on appointment (which includes a copy of the NGA publication for chairs) and provide opportunities for specific training and development to assist them in their strategic role.
- All pre-appointment clearance procedures to be completed for new and re-appointed governors and trustees including facilitation with annual returns for the register of interests.
- Assistance with the requirements of DBS checks for governors and trustees by providing advice and guidance as well as facilitating the annual return of self-certification forms, where appropriate.
- The maintenance of a database of all governor appointments, which includes personal and contact information, terms of office, meeting and training attendances and offices held, with reports generated on request (data stored securely in compliance with the Data Protection Act)
- At least two months' notice to be provided to appointing bodies of any expiry of terms of office of governors and trustees.
- Assistance for governing and trust boards in organising their workload and establishing effective terms of reference and structures of delegation.

Agendas and Meeting Notification

Through the service you can expect:

- The clerk to establish mutually convenient dates for the academic year in advance.
- The production and approval (with the chair and head teacher / principal) of comprehensive draft agendas which include relevant strategic items, highlighting local and national matters of interest affecting governance and education.
- Governors and trustees to receive written notice in advance of meetings which are to take place.
- Agendas and available supporting documentation to be made available to governors and trustees at least seven/fourteen clear days before the date of the meeting. (depending on arrangements)
- The facilitation of paperless meetings by providing access to the 'Bolton Governance Gateway', a secure online portal to manage meeting documentation and notifications of meetings.
- The set-up and management of virtual meeting via Microsoft Team, where applicable.

Clerking and Minute Taking

Support provided by a Governance Support Officer / Clerk to the Board

Through the service you can expect:

- To be allocated a Governance Support Officer (Clerk to the Board) who is experienced in minute writing, governance procedure and law who can produce accurate records of meetings including recording of resolutions and effective challenge and support.

- All clerks to have undertaken the National Clerks' Development Programme provided by the National Governance Association
- All clerks to be experienced in both academy and school governance law and procedure.
- All clerks to undertake regular internal and external CPD (Continuing Professional Development) opportunities to ensure their knowledge base on governance and education is maintained.
- The clerk to prepare comprehensive draft minutes of meetings within 15 school days of the meeting, agree them with the Chair and make a copy available to all governors via email and circulate with the next agenda.
- The clerk to undertake follow up action as appropriate and/or refer matters for action as relevant and ensure these are reported to the next meeting.

Support provided by a Minute Clerk

Through the service you can expect:

- The choice of purchasing a service whereby a Minute Clerk will attend to minute the meeting and provide advice on meeting procedure in order for the meeting to function effectively. (meetings may be held via virtual means if appropriate)
- Minute Clerks to be available to provide basic support for committee and additional board meetings. It is expected that a fully trained Governance Support Officer will support core meetings. The Minute Clerk will not provide higher level advice and guidance as expected from a Governance Support Officer (Clerk to Board)
- Service support and issuing of an agenda to be conducted by an assigned Governance Support Officer.
- The Minute Clerk to prepare draft minutes of meetings within 10 school days of the meeting, agree them with the Chair and circulate a copy with the next agenda. (Minutes to follow a similar format to those provided by the core service; however, the notes will not be as detailed)
- Minute Clerks to undertake regular internal CPD opportunities to ensure their knowledge of governance meeting procedure is maintained.
- Meetings will be supported by the online Governance Gateway

Clerking and Support Service Options

Core Service – Governing Board

Support will be provided by a fully trained Governance Support Officer. By purchasing the core service you can expect:

- The planning, preparation and clerking of three full governing board meetings including follow up action. (meetings may be held via virtual means if appropriate)
- Indemnified advice and support on governance law and procedure.
- Development and maintenance of committee terms of reference and delegation structures.
- Induction support for new governors and chair of governors.
- Attendance by the chair at termly Chairs' Briefing sessions.
- Preferential rates at conferences and events.
- Record and membership management.
- Access to the online Bolton Governance Gateway to access documentation to support board meetings.

Additional Services - Working Committees

Support will be provided for the servicing of additional or committee meetings, which include:

- Working committees such as finance, resources, school effectiveness etc.
- Working groups such as collaborative, raising achievement and specific project groups.
- Additional or extra-ordinary board meetings.

The governing board can choose to employ the services of a Minute Clerk to minute committee meetings. The Minute Clerk will not be able to provide high level advice and support at the meeting and the minutes will not be as detailed as that expected from a Governance Support Officer. The minutes will follow a similar format and the service will issue model meeting agendas for adaptation.

Meetings attended by a Minute Clerk will be supported by the online Bolton Governance Gateway.

Request for uploads of meeting documentation not clerked, will attract an additional charge based on the hourly rate.

Specialist Support for Complaints and Pupil Discipline Committees

Support will be provided to the Board as follows:

- The planning, preparation and clerking of the statutory committee by a specialist trained Governance Support Officer. (meetings may be held via virtual means if appropriate)
- Indemnified advice and guidance on statutory law and procedure throughout the process.
- Contact and date planning with parents and committee members
- Proof reading of all documentation for relevance and appropriateness and providing paper bundles for all recipients.
- Follow up letter with committee's decision written and dispatched within 1 working day
- Minutes prepared and approved within 15 school days.

Governance Training



The Governance Services Team aim to provide a comprehensive series of training courses to equip governors and trustees to carry out their roles effectively and enable them to strategically lead their schools and academies. The Governance Training Programme, which is produced annually, caters for those new to governance as well as those more experienced individuals who want to further their knowledge in a specialised area.

All training and development sessions are rigorously quality assured and reviewed regularly to ensure that they reflect both national initiatives and changes in legislation. Sessions are scheduled at various times throughout the day and early evening to accommodate governors and trustees with work or family commitments.

Governance Training Programme

Through the service you can expect:

- All governors and trustees to have access to a comprehensive annual programme of training to assist them in areas of governance and other education related matters.

- An online booking service that can be accessed 24 hours a day to gain information about training opportunities and to reserve places on sessions and events.
- Experienced trainers and presenters with the relevant subject knowledge to deliver training and development sessions to a high standard.
- The maintenance of records for all training and development accessed through the Governance Services Team to assist with skills audits and governance reviews.
- The ability to access joint training and development opportunities for clusters of schools and academies with the same identified needs.
- The evaluation of training and development to ensure that delivery objectives have been met and to quality assure the provision.
- Collaborative working with other Local Authority services to ensure that governing boards obtain up-to-date information and advice relating to training and development.
- Access to preferential rates for conferences and events.
- An opportunity to access the Governance E-Learning Training Package brokered through the National Governance Association, at a subsidised rate.

Governance Training Options

Training Programme & E-learning

Entitlement of all governors to attend unlimited centre based training offered through the annual programme and full access to a package of on-line training opportunities (except for safer recruitment training which is priced separately due to external accreditation). By purchasing the Gold Service you can expect:

- Training sessions to be held at various times throughout the day and early evening to allow governors to attend at their convenience.
- Training will take place with a blended approach to encompass both face-to-face and virtual sessions, providing greater flexibility for delegates.
- Confirmation, via email, of all bookings for training including the facilitation of text reminders one week prior to the session taking place.
- Provide appropriate materials for each attendee to facilitate their learning.
- Invite the Training and Development Lead for training to briefing sessions without additional charge.
- Apply a reduced non-attendance/cancellation charge in line with the cancellation policy
- Apply a 10% discount for any bespoke development or commissioned training purchased.
- Ensure that training venues are fit for purpose and provide light refreshments at all events and sessions. (A light lunch will be provided for full day sessions)
- Provide notification of training alterations (We will make every effort to notify in advance any change of trainer, where the planned training becomes inappropriate e.g. change in legislation, in an emergency e.g. adverse weather conditions we will attempt to contact delegates to confirm whether the course is running, where there are too few delegates to make the course viable we will give as much notice as possible that the course has been rescheduled.)
- Access to the suite of online training which will provide all governors on the board with unlimited access to the governance e-learning modules. The Governance E-Learning Training Package is brokered through the National Governance Association, at a subsidised rate.

Pay As You Go Training

Access to all available tutor led training session on a charged per session attendance basis.

Governance E-learning

Access to the Governance E-learning package provided via the National Governance Association, Learning Link only (preferential rates to schools and academy trusts through the Bolton Service Level Agreement)

Access to the suite of online training will provide all governors on the board with unlimited access to the e-learning modules. The sessions are continually updated and of a high quality and following an assessment of each session, a certificate is produced for the governor training file. The e-learning package is intended to complement the existing training whether accessed via the full Service Level Agreement for Training and Development or through the Pay As You Go Service.

Governance E-learning should not be seen as a replacement for tutor led sessions. By choosing to purchase the E-learning package, the governing board will have its own secure access to the hosting website which will be valid for one year.

Commissioned Training

In addition to the courses listed in the programme, the Governance Services Team can design, coordinate and deliver commissioned training courses specific to the needs of your board or local cluster of schools. Therefore, all courses within the programme are available on a commissioned basis and may be delivered via face to face session or by virtual means.

Strategic Governance Development



In these ever changing times, governors and trustees have a sharper role in a more autonomous system and their ability to challenge and lead is key; asking the right questions, knowing their organisation, understanding the data. Governance development is vital in order for boards to fulfil their roles effectively.

Governance Development Options

Individual and Modular Bespoke Development

Through experienced governance professionals, the Governance Services Team can provide governing and trust boards with an audit and self-evaluation to identify areas of development and training which may be required. Following this, a bespoke development session or a programme of modular sessions on specific issues and topics can be arranged. These can be varied in length and can be held throughout the daytime or evening, convenient to each board and can even be provided as cluster sessions with other boards in similar circumstances, where appropriate. These may take place via face to face sessions or via virtual means, as decided by the Board.

The bespoke sessions will look at documentation such as board and school improvement (development) plans, action plans and Ofsted recommendations to ensure sessions are relevant and planned effectively. The benefits of bespoke development are:

- Sessions will be tailored to your governing, trust or local academy board's specific needs.
- The sessions will address particular issues which have been raised through self-evaluation or external parties.
- The sessions, whilst providing development, also provide the opportunity for teamwork and bonding as a professional board
- The timing of the sessions can be varied, depending on governor and trustee time constraints.

Further information about the sessions available and associated costs are negotiable with the service. A reduced fee may be applicable for a series of modular sessions.

Strategic Chairs' Briefing Sessions

The chair's role in driving improvement and leading the governance team effectively is paramount and therefore the Governance Services Team provides termly briefing sessions to assist them in their role. The Chairs' Briefings are held early each term and are kept to a strict one hour session. They aim to prepare chairs for their forthcoming governing or trust board meetings and to equip them with the knowledge, information and advice needed to effectively undertake their role. Attendance at the termly Chairs' Briefing is free of charge for those schools purchasing the Clerking and Support Service Level Agreement and at an additional charge for those that do not. Additional places also may be charged separately. A blended approach will be taken so that sessions may be held via face to face sessions or by virtual means, as appropriate.

Governance Audits and Reviews

Further to the existing training and development opportunities, the Governance Services Team have developed a suite of lighter touch audit tools to provide an assessment on governance skills, experience and practices. The tools are expected to assist governing boards in their own development and provide a guided assessment conducted by a Governance Professional by way of a written report for the board to action as part of their own self-evaluation and quality assurance processes. The following audits are currently available for purchase on a commissioned basis:

Training and Development Audit

The Training and Development Audit aims to assess the existing skills and experience of each individual governor on the board and provides a written report which identifies possible routes for specific training and development.

- Individual governors are requested to complete an online survey which includes a skills audit and asks a number of questions about their involvement on the board.
- An experienced Governance Professional will review and assess the data and information provided.
- A short-written report will be provided to the board which will identify areas of training a development for individuals and the board as a whole.

Governing Board Meeting and Documentation Review

The Meeting Review will be conducted by an experienced Governance Professional and provides a review of current practice and effectiveness of board meetings.

- A Governance Professional will attend, by appointment, a meeting of the governing board or committee
- An assessment will be made on a number of factors including the quality of information provided by leaders, the quality of challenge and support provided by governors to school leaders and the general proceedings of the meeting, including chairing and support by the clerk to the board.
- Documentation will be reviewed prior to the meeting including the subsequent minutes of the meeting.
- A written report will be provided to the board highlighting areas of good practice and areas for development, where appropriate.

Terms and Conditions (the small print)

1. Resources and Practical Issues (what schools and can expect from the service)

Partnerships

The Governance Services Team seeks to continually improve the service it can offer to schools and academies by working with or being part of other groups and organisations including:

- The National Governance Association
- The National Co-ordinators of Governor Services
- Inspiring Governance & Governors for School
- The Manchester Diocesan Board of Education
- The Diocese of Salford Office for Education
- Inspiring Governance and Governors for Schools
- Other Local Authority teams and services providing services to schools and academies.

Charges

Details of charges for each option are set out in the agreements section of the SLA document.

Both the Clerking and Support and Training and Development traded services offered through the Bolton Governance Services Team are fully funded via buy back and receive no central funding from the Authority. The Governance Services Team receives a small amount of central funding from the Authority which covers the statutory duties it must legally provide to all maintained schools for governance, regardless of SLA uptake. Further information on statutory services is available on request.

Full payment for Option 1 for the Clerking and Support Service will be requested from schools/academies annually by September. Full payment in respect of the Training and Development Service will be requested from schools/academies annually by September. Payments of SLAs are conducted on a financial year basis – April to March.

Payment for any additional meetings, bespoke development, Pay As You Go or commissioned training will be requested from schools and academies at the end of each term.

Governing boards who do not buy into the Training and Development Service may still access any of the training and development offered; however; this will be charged on a pay as you go basis. Other members of school staff wishing to attend sessions as part of the Governor Training Programme, who are not members of the governing board, are welcome to attend at an additional cost.

Licenses for the Governance E-Learning package have been purchased by Bolton Council through the National Governance Association, Learning Link. This enables governing boards within the Bolton family to access the online suite of training at a discounted rate.

Services provided to private providers or out of borough will attract a 5% charge for the Clerking and Support Service and a 10% charge for Training and Development Services.

Cancellation Policy

Charges may still occur for any work undertaken in the preparation of additional meetings or commissioned and bespoke development in the event of the meeting or session being cancelled.

For those schools purchasing the Governance Training Programme under the service level agreement, a reduced cancellation fee of £25.00 per place will be charged to the school for non-attendance or cancellation of any sessions within 5 working days of the session date.

For those schools accessing the Governance Training Programme on a pay as you go basis, the full cost of the session will be made against the school budget for non-attendance and cancellation of any sessions within 5 working days of the session date.

The service can waive cancellations fees by individual consideration in special circumstances.

The Bolton Governance Gateway

The use of the Bolton governance Gateway is by means of a separate agreement between the governing / trust board and the Bolton Governance Services Team. Further information can be gained on request.

Resources and delivery

The Governance Services Team are based at the Bolton Science and Technology Centre. Governors, trustees and head teachers / principals are welcome to visit but we recommend they first make an appointment. The Team is available by telephone and email through normal working hours. Reduced staffing is in operation during school holiday periods. Officers may attend meetings on site at schools/academies by appointment, at times convenient to governors, trustees and head teachers/principals.

As part of the Governance Services Team's commitment to work-life balance all Governance Support Officers and Governor Development Officers are available to attend meetings from 9am in the morning until 9pm at night, Monday to Friday. Special requests for services out of these periods should be directed to the Senior Governance Support Officer.

Liability insurance

The Governance Services Team is part of the Local Authority and has comprehensive insurance arrangements that guard against any foreseeable claim by employees, suppliers, customers, third parties and other stakeholders.

Professional Codes and Confidentiality

The Governance Services Team is part of the Education and Learning Service within the People Services Department and as such is bound by the rules and standards set down by the Authority in various policy and guidance documents that may be amended from time to time. These documents can be made available to schools and academies on request.

Any information gathered as a result of work undertaken as part of this agreement will not be shared with any third party without the consent of the school/academy. In this instance the Local Authority is not a third party and staff within the Team are under an obligation to report any causes for concern in respect of a school's governance.

The Governance Services Team is the custodian of all information and documentation stored in relation to the clerking and support functions of the service, in line with the Data Protection Act and Bolton Council systems and security protocols. The service will not knowingly provide any documentation involved in the clerking and servicing of board

Terms and Conditions (the small print)

meetings to any third party without the express permission of the chair of the board or trust.

Bolton Governance Services has a privacy notice which describes how we collect, use and share personal information about our governors, trustees and leaders in relation to Governance Services and the types of personal information we need to process. The privacy notice can be accessed via the following link:

www.bolton.gov.uk/downloads/file/1853/governance-services-privacy-notice

Communications - Complaints / Feedback

Communications: Throughout the agreement period, service representatives and clients will agree a communications process to monitor and review ongoing process and to resolve outstanding matters on an informal basis. Ongoing evaluation processes are in place to ensure we monitor high standards of service – and views/suggestions on service delivery/modifications are welcomed.

Complaints: In the unlikely event that, following liaison with the service provider, your issues remain unresolved and you are still dissatisfied with the service you have received, your complaint in the first instance should be directed to:-

Quality Assurance and Improvement Team
1st Floor, Town Hall, Bolton, BL1 1RU
Email: quality@bolton.gov.uk
Tel: 01204 334236

Your complaint will be acknowledged on receipt (within 24 hours for email and 5 calendar days for letters) and we will respond fully/provide an update (if a full reply is not possible) within 14 calendar days in line with the Authority's Customer Care Standards.

2. Resources and Practical issues (what the service can expect from schools and academy trusts)

The Governance Services Team in undertaking duties for its clients, expect the following support in delivering the service:

Governing Board Clerking and Support

The school/academy will ensure:

- The supply to the LA **10 working days (20 working days for academies)** in advance of the governors' meeting, the head teacher's/principal's report, committee minutes and any other supporting documentation for distribution to governors with the agenda to enable compliance with the statutory requirement to give notice of meetings at least 7 days (14 days for academies) in advance. (colour copying, large policy documents or similar extraordinary documentation for full governing board meetings will attract an additional surcharge to cover copying/postal costs – Any such charges will be agreed by the Governance Services Team with the school in advance)
- That they conduct election of parent, staff governors in accordance with guidance issued by the Governance Services Team.
- That the service is informed of all board meetings and receives copies of any notes or minutes of meetings that, by agreement with the service, the clerk is not in attendance.
- That they notify the Governance Services Team of any changes in membership of the governing board.
- Academy Trusts will ensure that membership updates in

respect of the appointment of all members and trustees, including the chair of the trustees, accounting officer and chief financial officer are provided to the ESFA within 14 days.

- That they accept that the clerking service will cease at 9.00 pm.
- Prompt payment of any charges in respect of the SLA.
- That all governance information requested by the Department for Education be regularly updated on the GIAS (Get Information About Schools) website.
- That DBS and Section 128 checks are undertaken by all governors and trustees on the board and within 21 days of appointment

In the interests of efficiency and effective use of time and resources, schools and academies are asked to forward their papers to the Governance Services Team by email, preferably in PDF format. In the event that a school is unable to supply papers to the Team in sufficient time in advance of meetings, the Team will submit the agenda (and any other documentation which is available at that stage) to governors to ensure compliance with the statutory requirement for notice of meetings. Any late documentation should be sent to governors directly from the school (and to the Governance Services Team) if not using the online Governance Gateway.

Governor Training and Development

The school/academy will ensure:

- That the Governance Services Team are informed of any cancellation of sessions within five working days of the session date in order to avoid cancellation charges and to enable the place to be offered to others. (Fees may be waived in exceptional circumstances – A written application for the fee to be waived should be sent to the Governance Services Team for consideration.)
- That events and sessions are booked at least one week in advance wherever possible.
- That the Governance Services Team are informed of any individual request such as dietary/access requirements at the time of booking to allow for these to be met and avoid disappointment.
- Prompt payment of any charges in respect of the SLA.

3. Termination of Services

All Service Level Agreements operate on a rolling programme and therefore continue each financial year unless six months' notice is provided to terminate the contract.

Both parties will strive to resolve any issues should they arise regarding the operation of this agreement in an informal way at a very early stage.

If the school wishes to terminate an on-going SLA because they are dissatisfied with the service provided, the complaints procedure should be followed, as detailed in Section 1 of this agreement. If the complaint is not resolved to the satisfaction of the school, they may terminate the service level agreement by:

- The governing board passing a resolution to terminate the SLA mid-year.
- Forwarding a copy of the minutes detailing the board's decision to the Authority for the termination to be affected.

A period of six months is required for any terminations of services in respect of any Services to Schools, Service Level Agreements.