

Using the Great Big Governance Glossary 2026/27

Quick Start Guide

SBW
Governance

Using The Great Big Governance Glossary – Quick Start Guide

Thank you for downloading the Great Big Governance Glossary 2026/27. With over 200 definitions and explanations, this is a comprehensive reference document designed to support you throughout your governance journey. This quick-start guide will help you navigate the Glossary effectively and get the most from it.

What is the Glossary for?

The Glossary is one of your go-to reference tool for understanding the language, concepts, and practices of school governance. It's designed to:

- Demystify governance terminology – from acronyms and statutory terms to governance behaviours and strategic concepts
- Provide context and practical guidance – each entry includes not just definitions, but also questions to ask, top tips, and links to key guidance
- Support your development – whether you're preparing for your first meeting, doing a link visit, or reviewing a policy, the Glossary helps you understand what matters and why
- Act as a reference, not a manual – you don't need to read it cover to cover. Dip in and out as you need it

How to navigate the Glossary

The Glossary is organised alphabetically and includes:

- Over 200 A-Z entries covering everything from Accountability to Zero (via Pupil Premium, Safeguarding, Ofsted, and much more)
- Cross-references throughout – look for "See also" links to related entries
- Hyperlinks to key guidance – taking you straight to DfE documents, Ofsted frameworks, and other essential resources
- Top Tips and questions to ask – practical prompts to help you apply what you've learned
- A comprehensive contents list (page 6) showing all entries and page numbers
- A list of commonly used acronyms (page 162) – because governance is full of them!

How to use the Glossary effectively

If you're new to governance:

Start with the "Top 20 for New Governors" (page 13). These entries will give you a solid foundation in the essentials: your role, safeguarding, challenge, meetings, data, and more.

If you're preparing for a meeting:

Use the Ctrl+F search function to look up key terms from your papers. For example, if the agenda mentions Pupil Premium, SEND, or the Risk Register, search for those entries to understand what they mean and what questions you should be asking.

If you're doing a link visit:

Check the relevant entries before your visit – for example, S is for Safeguarding, S is for SEND, P is for Pupil Voice, or C is for Curriculum. Each entry includes suggested questions and things to look out for.

If you're supporting a new governor:

Share the "Top 20" list and encourage them to explore entries as they come up in meetings. Remind them that the Glossary is a reference tool, not homework!

If you're a clerk or Governance Professional:

Use the Glossary to support induction, refresh your own knowledge, and help governors understand complex terms or processes. Entries like M is for Minutes, C is for Clerk, and Q is for Quorate are particularly relevant.

Throughout the Glossary, you'll find:

- Questions to ask – prompts to help you challenge and seek assurance
- Top Tips – practical advice from an experienced governance professional
- Examples and scenarios – real-world illustrations of governance in action
- "See also" links – connecting related entries so you can explore topics in depth
- Hyperlinks to guidance – taking you straight to the source documents you need

A few important reminders

- This is a reference guide, not a novel. You don't need to read it cover to cover. Use it when you need it.
- Governance changes. Guidance, policies, and requirements are updated regularly. Always check current statutory guidance and verify information against primary sources before making decisions.
- The Glossary is an opinion piece. The views, tips, and suggestions are those of the author. If you're unsure about anything, check with your clerk, chair, headteacher, or CEO.
- There's more at the end! Don't miss the "Not only but also..." section (page 167), which includes additional definitions that didn't make the main A-Z but are still important.

If you're new to governance, these 20 entries are a great place to begin:

- A is for Accountability (*a core function*)
- C is for Challenge (*what it means*)
- C is for Clerk (*who they are and what they do*)
- C is for Code of Conduct (*Nolan Principles*)
- C is for Confidentiality (*what you can and cannot share*)
- D is for Data (*how to interpret it*)
- F is for Finance (*budget basics*)
- G is for Governor (*understanding the role*)
- I is for Inclusion (*what it means in practice*)
- K is for Knowing Your School (*understanding context*)
- M is for Meetings (*what to expect*)
- is for Ofsted (*what to expect*)
- P is for Pupil Premium (*key funding*)
- Q is for Questions (*how to ask them*)
- S is for Safeguarding (*KCSIE*)
- S is for Strategic (*versus operational*)
- T is for Training (*your development*)
- V is for Visits (*link governor visits*)
- W is for Wellbeing (*yours and others'*)

- Y is for You (*your voice matters*)

Final thoughts

The Glossary is here to support you. Governance can feel overwhelming at first, but remember: you don't need to know everything on day one. Use this resource to build your knowledge gradually, ask better questions, and grow in confidence.

And most importantly, remember why you're here: to make a difference to the lives of children and young people.

Good luck – and enjoy the journey!

About SBW Governance

SBW Governance is owned by Fee Stagg, who was a National Leader of Governance until August 2021. Fee has more than 20 years' experience as a governor, trustee, and clerk. She is currently Chair of Trustees in both the East and West Midlands, and also serves as a local governor and Member in other schools and trusts. Fee works as a Governance Professional across a number of schools, trusts, and Local Governing Boards in the north west and midlands areas.

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