

Southwark Schools Human Resources

Newsletter – 19th June 2026

Contents

INTRODUCTION AND SERVICE UPDATES	4
SCHOOLS HR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT	5
Safer Recruitment Offer – 2026/2027	5
Safer Recruitment Training – the Full Course.....	5
Safer Recruitment Refresher Training	7
How to book	8
Training dates.....	8
TERMS AND CONDITIONS – UPDATE	9
SCHOOL TEACHERS PAY AND CONDITIONS DOCUMENT – implemented from September...	9
NJC TERMS AND CONDITIONS – REMOVAL OF SCP 2 FROM THE NJC PAY SPINE (EFFECTIVE FROM 1 ST APRIL 2026)	10
NJC Terms and Conditions: Support Staff Pay – normally implemented from 1 st April of each year	14
LGPS Pension Rates for the financial year 2026/2027	16
LEGISLATION	17
Trade Union & Industrial Action Changes (Now in Force)	17
Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026	19
Qualified Teacher Status in Primary and Secondary Academies – from 1 st September 2027	20
IT / ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE.....	21
DfE Support Material: Using Artificial Intelligence in Education Settings.....	21
WELLBEING.....	23
Mental Health Apps – new MRHA Regulations	23

USEFUL INFORMATION FOR SCHOOL BUSINESS MANAGERS.....	24
Supply Teachers and Education Recruitment	24
Upcoming energy contract renewals.....	26
Health and Safety	27
Staff Safety, Reasonable Force and Employer Responsibilities.....	27
REFLECTION.....	29
Leadership Bite: Feelings or Judgements?	29

INTRODUCTION AND SERVICE UPDATES

Welcome to the latest edition of the Schools HR Newsletter.

It has been some time since our last newsletter, with the previous edition published before Easter. During this period, the Schools HR Team has experienced a number of changes, including the departures of Fiona Brown, Schools HR Adviser, and Bryn Davies, Schools HR Administrator, who both left the team within a short period of each other.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Fiona and Bryn for their contributions and wish them every success in their future roles.

Many of you may already have met Jordan Webster, who has joined us as our temporary Schools HR Administrator and is providing valuable support to schools while arrangements are ongoing.

While the team continues to adapt to these changes, our HR Business Partners remain available to support schools, working closely with Headteachers and school leaders to provide advice, guidance and practical HR solutions.

Despite these changes, the team remains committed to supporting schools and providing timely HR advice and guidance. In this edition, we share key updates, reminders, and information to help you manage your workforce effectively.

This newsletter has been shared in an alternative format due to ongoing issues with SWAY, our usual communication platform. We would welcome your feedback on this approach.

We hope you find this newsletter useful and welcome any feedback or suggestions for future editions.

useful and welcome any feedback or suggestions for future editions.

If you have any queries, please contact us:

schoolshr@southwark.gov.uk

SCHOOLS HR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Safer Recruitment Offer – 2026/2027

We are pleased to announce that our Safer Recruitment Training (SRT) is now live on our [website](#) and available for booking.

Safer Recruitment Training – the Full Course

Description:

This comprehensive full-day training equips school and trust staff with the knowledge and practical skills required to implement effective safer recruitment practices and respond confidently to safeguarding concerns.

Aligned with *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)* and informed by Lucy Faithfull Foundation approaches, the course explores preventative safeguarding, recognising harmful sexual behaviour, and maintaining robust recruitment processes that protect children and young people.

Through interactive discussion and case study scenarios, participants will strengthen their ability to identify risk, make informed decisions, and contribute to a strong safeguarding culture across their organisation.

Who Should Attend

- Headteachers / Principals
- Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
- HR professionals and recruitment leads
- Governors and Trustees (particularly those on interview panels)
- Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) and deputies
- Any staff involved in recruitment or safeguarding decision-making

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, participants will be able to:

- Understand statutory safeguarding duties, including *KCS/E* requirements
- Apply safer recruitment practices throughout all stages of hiring
- Conduct safeguarding-focused interviews and make defensible decisions
- Identify and respond appropriately to signs of abuse and harmful behaviour
- Recognise indicators of harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) and associated risks
- Understand safer working practices and maintaining professional boundaries
- Complete and monitor pre-employment checks, including SCR compliance
- Respond effectively to safeguarding concerns, including escalation and recording
- Contribute to a proactive safeguarding culture that prioritises prevention

Safer Recruitment Refresher Training

Duration: Half day / Virtual

Description:

This refresher session is designed to update and reinforce safer recruitment practice in line with current *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)* guidance.

Participants will revisit key elements of the recruitment process, including safer shortlisting, identifying gaps or concerns in employment history, conducting safeguarding-focused interviews, and ensuring robust pre-employment checks. The session will also highlight common risks, emerging safeguarding themes, and expectations around maintaining an accurate Single Central Record (SCR).

Ideal for ensuring continued compliance, consistency, and confidence in recruitment decision-making.

Who Should Attend

Staff who have previously completed Safer Recruitment training (within the last 2–3 years), including:

- Headteachers / Principals
- Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
- HR staff and recruitment leads
- Governors / Trustees involved in interview panels
- Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) and deputies
- Any staff participating in recruitment processes

How to book

To view upcoming dates and secure your place, please visit our [website](#) and book online.

Places are limited, so we encourage booking early to avoid disappointment.

Training dates

Safer Recruitment Training - Full Course		
17/09/2026	9.30am to 4.30pm	In person – Tooley Street
21/01/2027	9.30am to 4.30pm	In person – Tooley Street
06/05/2027	9.30am to 4.30pm	In person – Tooley Street
Safer Recruitment Training - Refresher		
24/09/2026	10am to 2pm	Virtual
12/11/2026	10am to 2pm	Virtual
07/01/2027	10am to 2pm	Virtual
04/03/2027	10am to 2pm	Virtual
13/05/2027	10am to 2pm	Virtual

TERMS AND CONDITIONS – UPDATE

SCHOOL TEACHERS PAY AND CONDITIONS DOCUMENT – implemented from September

This is not yet available and there will be a survey to gather views on the draft STPCD 2026.

We will keep you updated.

NJC TERMS AND CONDITIONS – REMOVAL OF SCP 2 FROM THE NJC PAY SPINE (EFFECTIVE FROM 1ST APRIL 2026)

Changes to the NJC Pay Spine – Removal of SCP 2 (Effective 1 April 2026)

From 1 April 2026, the National Joint Council (NJC) pay spine will change. Spinal Column Point (SCP) 2 will be removed from the NJC pay structure.

This update explains what is changing, why the change is being made, and what it means for schools, staff, and managers.

Why is this happening?

The NJC has agreed to delete SCP 2 from the pay spine as part of the national pay agreement. This change supports a fair and sustainable pay structure, particularly at the lower end of the scale.

In recent years, SCP 2 has become less relevant as pay rates have increased to meet statutory minimum wage requirements. Removing this point simplifies the structure and ensures all pay points remain compliant and competitive.

What is changing?

From 1 April 2026, SCP 2 will be removed from the NJC pay spine nationally.

- SCP 2 will no longer exist in any grade.
- All other spinal column points remain unchanged at this stage.

01		02		03	
		2	£29,808	2	£29,808
		3	£30,225	3	£30,225
				4	£30,654
		2	£29,808	5	£31,086
		3	£30,225	6	£31,530
2	£29,808	4	£30,654		

-
- New 2025/2026 Grades post- 1st April 2026

01		02		03	
				2	Deleted
				3	£30,225
		2	Deleted	4	£30,654
		3	£30,225	5	£31,086
		4	£30,654	6	£31,530
2	Deleted				

Impact on schools

There are very few school-based staff currently paid at SCP 2. As a result, the overall financial impact on school budgets is expected to be minimal.

Impact on staff

- Staff currently on SCP 2 will move automatically to SCP 3 from 1 April 2026.
- Staff will remain within their existing grade (e.g. Scale 2 or Scale 3), unless they are currently on Scale 1.

Exception:

- Staff on SCP 2 within Scale 1 will move to Scale 2, SCP 3 from 1 April 2026.
- These staff will then be eligible to progress to SCP 4 in April 2027 in line with normal incremental progression.

What actions do schools need to take?

Schools should:

1. Identify any staff currently on SCP 2
2. Notify payroll of the required changes effective from 1 April 2026
3. Inform affected staff of the changes

Is this mandatory?

Yes. Any employer operating under NJC terms must remove SCP 2 from their pay structure by April 2026.

Employers not aligned with NJC terms may wish to consider similar changes in line with their local pay policies.

Further information

There are currently no other confirmed changes to NJC pay scales, as no agreement has yet been reached between employers and trade unions for the 2026–2027 pay award.

Schools HR will provide further updates as soon as any new national pay agreements are confirmed.

Suggested Staff Letter

Subject: Change to NJC Pay Spine – Effective 1 April 2026

Dear [Name],

We are writing to inform you of a national change to the NJC (National Joint Council) pay spine, which will take effect from 1 April 2026.

As part of the national pay agreement, Spinal Column Point (SCP) 2 will be removed from the NJC pay structure.

What this means for you

As you are currently paid at SCP 2, your salary will automatically move to SCP 3 from 1 April 2026.

- Your grade will remain the same (unless you are currently on Scale 1 – see below)
- There will be no requirement for any action on your part

If you are currently on Scale 1:

You will move to Scale 2, SCP 3 from 1 April 2026. You will then be eligible for your next increment (SCP 4) in April 2027, subject to normal incremental progression arrangements.

Why this change is being made

This is a national change agreed by the NJC to ensure that the pay structure remains fair, sustainable, and aligned with minimum wage requirements.

Further information

If you have any questions about how this affects your pay, please contact [HR/Payroll contact details].

Thank you for your continued contribution to the school.

Yours sincerely,

[Name] / [Job Title]

NJC Terms and Conditions: Support Staff Pay – normally implemented from 1st April of each year

At the time of writing, the NJC pay has not yet been agreed and signed off by the three recognised trade unions, GMB, Unison and Unite.

EMPLOYERS' POSITION

With effect from 1 April 2026:

- an increase of 3.30 per cent (to be paid as a consolidated, permanent addition on all NJC pay points 3 to 43 inclusive, and on all pay points above the maximum of the pay spine but graded below deputy chief officer).
- an increase of 3.30 per cent on all NJC allowances.

TRADE UNIONS' POSITION

NJC unions' 2026 (one-year) pay claim

- An increase of at least £3,000 or 10 per cent (whichever is greater).
- A minimum pay rate of £15 an hour.
- A two-hour reduction in the working week.
- An increase of one day annual leave.
- The ability of all school support staff to take a day of paid leave during term time
- The abolition of Level 1 Teaching Assistant role and instead all Level 1 role holders be moved onto Level 2.

NJC unions' 2026 (multi-year) pay claim

Year 1: £3,000 or 10 per cent (whichever is greater) on all spinal column points, alongside the introduction of a £15 minimum hourly rate.

Year 2: An increase of RPI + 3 per cent • Year 3: An increase of RPI + 2 per cent.

NJC unions' next steps

UNISON rejected without consulting its members. It will be conducting disaggregated ballots for industrial action in some, not all, councils / schools / NJC employer organisations from 9 July 2026 to 6 August 2026.

GMB adopted a neutral position in its consultation, leaving its members to decide for themselves whether to accept or reject the offer. Its members voted to reject. Next steps to be discussed 18 June.

Unite rejected the offer without consulting its members. It is expected to conduct ballots for industrial action 'during the summer'.

LGPS Pension Rates for the financial year 2026/2027

For the 2026/27 financial year starting 1 April 2026, the employer contribution rate for the Southwark Pension Fund is expected to be 17.3%.

This new rate represents a reduction from the previous level of 20.5%. These rates are reviewed every three years by the scheme actuary as part of a statutory valuation process to ensure the fund remains sufficiently funded.

Southwark LGPS 2026/27 Contribution Summary

- Employer Contribution Rate: 17.3%.
- Effective Date: 1 April 2026.
- Valuation Cycle: Based on the 2025 Actuarial Valuation.
- Funding Position: The fund recorded a 110% surplus buffer, which facilitated the rate reduction.

LEGISLATION

Trade Union & Industrial Action Changes (Now in Force)

Significant changes to trade union law came into effect on 18 February 2026, affecting how industrial action is organised and how schools respond. Below is a summary of the key changes now in place and what they mean for schools.

What Has Changed?

1. Lower thresholds for industrial action

- The 40% support threshold for education has been removed.
- Industrial action now requires a simple majority of those voting (subject to the 50% turnout requirement, which remains in place for now).

2. Less bureaucracy in ballots

- Trade unions are no longer required to provide as much detailed information in ballot notices.
- Ballot papers have been simplified – members are only asked whether they support:
 - strike action
 - action short of strike

3. Shorter notice period

- Notice of industrial action has reduced from 14 days to 10 days, meaning schools may have less time to prepare.

4. Longer duration of industrial action mandates

- Ballot mandates have increased from 6 months to 12 months, allowing unions a longer window to take action.

5. Stronger protection for employees

- Employees taking part in lawful industrial action now have full protection from unfair dismissal, with no time limit (previously limited to a 12-week period).

6. Changes to picketing rules

- Trade unions are no longer required to appoint picket supervisors.

7. Facility time and check-off changes

- The requirement to report trade union facility time under the Trade Union Act 2016 has been repealed.
- Employers are no longer required to charge for payroll union subscription deductions (“check-off”).
- Transparency reporting requirements for local authorities remain in place for now.

What This Means for School Leaders and Governors

This evolving environment reinforces the importance of:

- Maintaining strong, professional relationships with trade unions.
- Embedding a culture of mutual respect and trust.
- Ensuring consistent and clear communication with staff.
- Taking a proactive approach to engagement, rather than a reactive one.

Looking Ahead

Further reforms are expected later in 2026, including:

- New union access rights to workplaces.
- A duty to inform staff of their right to join a union.
- Potential changes to turnout thresholds and electronic balloting.

We will continue to provide updates as these changes are implemented.

Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act received Royal Assent on 29 April 2026. Most measures will be introduced in phases through secondary legislation, and implementation dates have not yet been confirmed.

SAFEGUARDING CHANGES

The Act introduces a number of important changes that schools should be aware of:

- A new statutory duty on information sharing between schools and children's social care.
- A requirement for safeguarding partners to give education a formal role within local safeguarding arrangements.
- The piloting of a Single Unique Identifier (SUI) for children across services, aimed at improving multi-agency tracking of vulnerable pupils.

Elective Home Education provisions will also be strengthened, including:

- Introduction of Children Not in School registers in every local authority.
- Additional checks before children can be withdrawn from school where safeguarding concerns exist.

What This Means for Schools

Although detailed guidance is still to follow, schools should note that some broader elements of the Act are expected to be in place from September 2026, including:

- Uniform policy compliance requirements
- Expanded breakfast club provision.
- Changes to free school meal eligibility.

Further updates will be shared as implementation timelines and statutory guidance are confirmed.

Useful information:

[Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026](#)

Qualified Teacher Status in Primary and Secondary Academies – from 1st September 2027

[Clause 53](#) of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 will make changes to the QTS and statutory induction requirements in primary and secondary academies from **1 September 2027**.

Please see attached the DfE Summary Document setting out the changes.



QTS changes
information for schoo

IT / ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

DfE Support Material: Using Artificial Intelligence in Education Settings

The Department for Education has recently updated its support materials to help schools and colleges use artificial intelligence (AI) safely, effectively and responsibly.

The materials are intended for all school staff and school leaders and cover:

- Understanding AI in education.
- Interacting with generative AI tools.
- Safe use of AI in education settings.
- Practical use cases for AI in schools.
- Leadership considerations for implementing AI within a school setting.

The DfE emphasises that AI should support professional practice rather than replace professional judgement. Staff remain responsible for checking the accuracy, appropriateness and suitability of any AI-generated content before it is used with pupils, parents, colleagues or external agencies.

Key expectations for staff include:

- **Following school policies on data protection, safeguarding, confidentiality and information security.**
- **Not entering personal, sensitive or confidential pupil, parent or staff information into public AI tools unless expressly authorised and compliant with school procedures.**
- **Critically reviewing all AI-generated outputs for accuracy, bias and suitability.**
- **Ensuring professional judgement remains central to all educational, pastoral and safeguarding decisions.**

Being mindful of copyright, intellectual property and academic integrity considerations.

The DfE materials highlight that AI may assist with administrative tasks, resource creation and workload reduction; however, safety, safeguarding and data protection must remain the priority.

All staff are encouraged to review the DfE training materials and discuss any questions with their line manager or school leadership team before introducing new AI tools into their practice.

Useful information:

[Using AI in education settings: support materials - GOV.UK](#)

WELLBEING

Mental Health Apps – new MRHA Regulations

Supporting wellbeing across our school community remains a key priority and is central to creating an environment where both staff and pupils can thrive.

From an HR perspective, schools should continue to prioritise a culture that promotes positive mental health, early identification of need, and access to appropriate support and resources.

The use of digital wellbeing tools, including mental health apps, is becoming increasingly common. When used appropriately, these can be helpful in supporting resilience, self-care, and early awareness of wellbeing concerns. This is particularly the case for apps focused on general wellbeing, such as mindfulness, sleep support, stress management, or mood tracking.

It is important, however, to distinguish between general wellbeing tools and those that claim to diagnose, treat, manage, or clinically intervene in a mental health condition. Where an app goes beyond general support and is intended to provide a clinical function, it may be classified as a medical device and therefore fall under Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) regulation, including requirements such as UKCA or CE marking.

When selecting or recommending tools, staff should consider whether the product is offering general wellbeing support or presenting itself as a clinical intervention. In the latter case, appropriate due diligence must be undertaken to ensure the tool is safe, suitable, and compliant with relevant regulatory standards before use in a school context.

Safeguarding remains the highest priority, and any concerns about a pupil's mental health should always be managed through established pastoral and safeguarding procedures rather than relying on digital tools alone.

Staff are encouraged to continue supporting wellbeing in day-to-day practice, while applying professional judgement when choosing and using external resources.

Useful information:

[MRHA Guidance for Mental Health Apps](#)

USEFUL INFORMATION FOR SCHOOL BUSINESS MANAGERS

Supply Teachers and Education Recruitment

Schools in England collectively spend approximately £1.4 billion a year on agency supply staff - approximately 3% of total expenditure, with every pound lost to inflated fees being a pound that cannot be invested in the classroom.

The new Supply Teachers and Education Recruitment (STeER) framework, from Government Commercial Agency (GCA), that went live on 1st May 2026, aims to change that by capping agency fees to address unacceptable supplier practices and deliver frontline savings. It offers access a range of experienced suppliers providing temporary, permanent and fixed-term teachers and support staff.

All state funded schools and trusts can use the framework. Public sector colleges, nurseries and preschools can also use it through GCS.

ACTION FOR ACADEMIES AND TRUSTS: From September 2026, single and multi-academy trusts are mandated to procure supply staff through the framework agreement.

What the framework covers

Temporary, fixed term and permanent teaching and non-teaching roles through agencies. These include:

- classroom teachers
- teaching assistants
- SEN specialists
- cover supervisors
- senior leaders

- operational staff such as administrators, IT, facilities, catering and transport staff

What it offers

- ways to hire temporary and permanent workers through agencies
- predictable and transparent costs
- a free way to make temporary workers permanent after 12 weeks, with 4 weeks' notice
- the option to use a managed service for temporary staff
- the option to hire a specific person you know, called a nominated worker

Benefits

- savings from DfE negotiated rates and capped supplier fees
- predictable costs for simpler budgeting
- no fees for temporary staff becoming permanent
- suppliers complete safeguarding checks
- dedicated one-to-one support from GCA, YPO and ESPO

All frameworks and DPS offer

- compliance with the relevant procurement regulations
- suppliers pre-checked by the approved framework / DPS provider
- pre-agreed terms and conditions

How to use the framework

[Buyer Lot Decision Tree RM6376](#)

Useful information:

[Supply Teachers and Education Recruitment - Get help buying for schools](#)

[A better deal on agency supply staff: what the new Supply Teachers and Education Recruitment framework means for schools and trusts – Buying for Schools](#)

Upcoming energy contract renewals

If your school's energy contract is due for renewal within the next 12 months, it is important to start planning early.

There are currently very few competitive fixed-price deals available in the market. As a result, schools may wish to consider longer-term variable-rate options, such as the

These arrangements can offer:

- Access to competitive public sector pricing
- Greater medium-term stability compared to short-term fixed deals
- Improved financial planning and budget forecasting

You are encouraged to:

Consider signing up to the [DfE Energy for Schools Service](#), or

- Review comparable frameworks available through approved public sector buying organisations

Taking early action can support better cost management and reduce exposure to market volatility.

For further information or support, please contact:

energy.schools@education.gov.uk

Health and Safety

Staff Safety, Reasonable Force and Employer Responsibilities

Schools are facing increasing levels of challenging behaviour, including incidents of aggression. For employers, this raises important questions about how to support staff, meet legal duties, and maintain safe learning environments.

Reasonable Force: Clarity and Caution

DfE guidance confirms that staff can use **reasonable force where necessary to prevent harm, injury or serious disruption**.

However, it must always be **lawful, necessary and proportionate**, and used only as a last resort.

[\[gov.uk\]](#) [\[assets.pub...ice.gov.uk\]](#)

Updated guidance (from April 2026) reinforces expectations on schools to:

- Prioritise **prevention and de-escalation**
- **Record and report** significant incidents
- Ensure staff are trained and supported [\[assets.pub...ice.gov.uk\]](#)

For employers, this means creating clear policies and ensuring staff feel confident—but not exposed.

Violence at Work: A Health and Safety Issue

The HSE defines workplace violence as **any abuse, threat or assault related to work**, including verbal abuse and pupil aggression. [\[hse.gov.uk\]](#)

The impact goes beyond physical injury, contributing to:

- Stress and poor mental health
- Increased absence and turnover
- Recruitment and retention challenges [\[hse.gov.uk\]](#)

Employers have a duty to **assess risk, implement controls, and support staff after incidents.**

A System Approach: Learning from the NHS

The NHS Violence Prevention and Reduction Standard highlights the importance of:

- **Strong leadership accountability**
- A culture where staff feel safe to report incidents
- Using data and continuous improvement to reduce harm [\[england.nhs.uk\]](https://www.england.nhs.uk)

This reinforces that violence prevention should be **strategic, not reactive.**

Key Implications for Schools

From an HR perspective, priorities should include:

- Clear, aligned policies on behaviour and safety.
- Training in de-escalation and safe intervention.
- Robust incident reporting and analysis.
- Strong staff wellbeing and post-incident support.

REFLECTION

Leadership Bite: Feelings or Judgements?

When we say:

“I feel **that**...”,

“I feel **like**...”, or

“**it’s as if**...”,

we are often not expressing a feeling—but a judgement or assumption about someone else.

For example:

“**I feel like you’re not engaged**” can sound critical.

“**I feel concerned about engagement in this area**” keeps the focus on your feeling and opens a better conversation.

As leaders, this distinction matters. Clear, non-judgemental language reduces defensiveness, builds trust, and supports more constructive dialogue.

Pause and ask yourself: Am I naming a feeling, or making a judgement?

Small shifts in language make a big difference to how leadership is experienced.