



Association of Business  
Leaders in Education

# ABLE NEWS

SUMMER 2026

## Message from the Chair

I hope you had a proper break over Easter. Joe and I managed to get out for a lovely dinner, Jaxon spent the holidays largely feral in his nan's garden, and I am seriously considering Forest School at this rate.

And now here we are. Summer term. Full of possibility and quietly relentless at the same time.

There's a lot happening across the ABLE network this term, and I want to make sure you're up to date with everything that's going on.

The ABLE SBL Recognition Awards are now open for nominations. This matters to me personally. The people in this network do remarkable work, often without anyone saying so out loud, and these awards exist to change that. Five categories. A couple of minutes to nominate. If someone came to mind reading that, please do not talk yourself out of it.

Nominate here: <https://ablepro.info/school-business-leader-awards/>

Nominations close 22 May.

The Summer Conference is on Thursday 11 June at Eastwood Hall. The awards ceremony takes place live in the room at 1:30pm, which I am genuinely looking forward to. Members can book using code ABLEMEMBER1106. If you know someone who has never been to an ABLE conference, pass on code ECCOMP for a free place at the conference.

Summer term is the one that tests people most. I hope this newsletter gives you something useful and reminds you that you are not dealing with any of it alone.

Best wishes,  
Emma Cripwell,  
Chair, ABLE



Conference  
11 June 2026  
Booking Now  
Open



Atom IT



### 08:30-09:00

Registration, Exhibition and Coffee

### 09:00-09:20

Welcome Update, App Prizes Awarded to Members- Chair, Emma Cripwell

### 09:20-09:35

Partner Updates- Breedon, Atom IT, SAS

### 09:35-09:50

Sponsor Presentation

### 09:50-10:30

Keynote – Ben Waldram – Having Meaningful Conversations with your HT and Opening the Lines of Communication

### 10:30-11:15

Networking, Exhibition and Refreshments

### 11:15-12:15

Choice of workshops

1.What SBMs Need to Know Before Ofsted Comes Knocking – Ben Waldram

2.Cyber Crime Escape Room – John Hammond

3.Retirement Planning – Secure Your Future With Confidence – Will Stokes

### 12:15-13:15

Lunch, Exhibition and Networking

### 13:15-13:30

Stephen Morales- Update from ISBL

### 13:30-14:10

ABLE School Business Leader Recognition Awards

### 14:10-14:30

Networking, Exhibition and Refreshments

### 14:30-15:30

Choice of workshops

1.Preparedness and Risk Management – Sally Boaden, Raleigh MAT

2. Just Say No! Small Word, Big Impact for School Business Leaders – Gemma Drinkall

3.Delegate Networking

### 15:30

Raffle Results

[Book Now! >](#)



## What Matters Most This Term and What Can Wait

The summer term has a way of arriving at full speed. SATs. Exams. Transition planning. Staffing decisions. End-of-year everything.

But for many school business leaders, this time of year is less about sprinting to the finish line and more about finding a way to keep going when the tank is already half empty.

After a long spring term and the short reset of Easter, it is normal to feel like you are returning to a list that has only grown while you were away. At ABLE, we see this every year and we want to say this clearly. That is okay.

The start of the summer term does not have to mean picking up exactly where you left off at the same pace. It can be a moment to reset, reprioritise, and decide what really needs your energy between now and July.

Instead of asking yourself how you are going to get through everything, it can help to ask a different question. What matters most this term, and what can wait?

That might mean being honest about what is realistic and letting go of the things that will still be there in September.

It might mean protecting time in your week before the end-of-year rush fills every gap.

It might mean leaning on the people around you, colleagues who understand the weight of this role and remind you that you do not have to carry it alone.

Productivity in the summer term does not always look like ticking off every item on the list. Sometimes it looks like a clear head, a good conversation with a colleague, or the confidence to say not yet to something that can wait.

The days are longer but that does not mean you should be working longer with them. Energy is not unlimited, and the demands of this term are real. Pacing yourself is not a weakness. It is how you get to July in one piece.

At ABLE, we believe the best school business leaders are not the ones who do everything. They are the ones who know what matters, ask for support when they need it, and look after themselves along the way.

As this term unfolds, give yourself permission to prioritise ruthlessly. Focus on what helps you feel steady, supported, and in control. The end of year will come soon enough.

Sometimes the most powerful way to finish strong is to stop trying to do it all at once.



## ABLE SBL Recognition Awards

### The People Who Deserve to Hear It Out Loud

Every school has one.

The person who sorted the crisis before anyone else knew there was one. The one who found the underspend that protected three members of staff. The one who noticed a colleague was struggling and quietly made sure they were okay. The one who rebuilt a process nobody else wanted to touch and handed it back better than anyone expected.

They were the first in and among the last to leave. They absorbed the problems before anyone else had to. They made the building function, the compliance happen, the budget hold. These are School Business Leaders. And most of the time, nobody says it loudly enough.

The ABLE SBL Recognition Awards exist to change that.

Now in their second year, the awards celebrate School Business Leaders across Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire who are doing genuinely important work. Not the loudest voices. Not the most senior titles. The people doing exceptional work, often quietly, often without thanks.

Nominations can come from anyone. A headteacher, a colleague, a peer from another school, or the individual themselves. There is no hierarchy to who can nominate and no requirement for the nominee to know they have been put forward.

A few sentences describing what this person does and what would be different without them is all you need. The most effective nominations are honest and specific, not formal or lengthy.

If someone came to mind reading this, that instinct is worth trusting.

Nominations are open now and close at **11pm on Friday 22 May**.

**Nominate someone who deserves to be recognised. The form takes two minutes.**

**Nominations close 11pm, Friday 22nd May 2026.**

**<https://ablepro.info/school-business-leader-awards/>**



## ABLE SBL Recognition Awards

### The Five Categories

#### **School Business Leader of the Year, sponsored by Atom IT.**

For the person who holds everything together across the whole organisation. Not one area of expertise, but the full breadth of the role: finance, operations, HR, compliance, facilities, and the hundred things in between. Judges are looking for sustained, high-quality contribution that makes a real difference to the people and the school around them.

#### **Rising Star Award, sponsored by Breedon.**

For someone earlier in their school business leadership career but already performing at an exceptional level. They have taken on responsibility ahead of schedule, handled it with skill, and shown the kind of impact and growth that sets them apart.

#### **Wellbeing Advocate Award, sponsored by Schools Advisory Service.**

For the person who makes sure everyone else is okay. Not through one-off gestures, but through the sustained, often invisible work of noticing when colleagues are struggling, creating environments where people feel seen and supported.

#### **Financial Expertise Award, supported by the Department for Education.**

For the person whose skill and judgement protect the school's financial future. Not just sound budget management, but the strategic thinking and careful decisions that make the complex look manageable and the difficult look routine.

#### **Operational Excellence Award, supported by ISBL.**

For the person who makes the impossible look straightforward. Who has solved problems that seemed unsolvable, built or rebuilt systems the school now depends on, and made complexity invisible for everyone around them.

#### **The Ceremony**

Winners are announced live in the room at 1:30pm on Thursday 11 June at Eastwood Hall. Finalists will not know in advance whether they have won. If your nominee becomes a finalist, you will receive a personal invitation to be in the room for that moment, free of charge.

Use code **AWARDS** when booking your conference place.

When someone wins, their school receives a **£250 contribution** as a thank you for the environment that has allowed them to thrive.



## Finance

### The Budget Pressure That Is Not Going Away

Most school business leaders entered 2025/26 already knowing it would be hard. The reality has been harder than expected.

School costs are rising by around **3.4% this year**. Mainstream funding has increased by 2.2%. That gap is not abstract. It is the difference between protecting a member of staff or not. It is the decision between the provision a child needs and what the school can actually afford.

The government admitted in early 2025 that most schools would not be able to cover the cost of staff pay awards from their existing budgets. The DfE's own school costs technical note confirmed schools could afford a pay rise of around 1.3% against a recommended 2.8% for teachers. Schools are expected to find the difference through efficiencies. For most, there is nowhere left to look.

National Insurance contribution increases added further strain. The government provided a £1 billion grant to offset employer NIC costs, but school leaders reported shortfalls of up to 35% against what they actually needed.

The deepest structural pressure remains SEND. The number of pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans has risen to almost 576,000 in 2024, up from around 237,000 a decade ago. The Office for Budget Responsibility forecasts a £6 billion gap between SEND spending and funding by 2028/29. For many schools in the East Midlands, this is not a future problem. It is the pressure they are managing now, term by term.

A Schools White Paper is expected later this year, which may address SEND reform. Until then, the decisions on how to manage that pressure sit squarely with the people running school finances.

Across the network, the same question keeps coming up: how do you protect what matters most when everything is competing at once?

**Schools' costs are expected to rise by 3.4% next year, but mainstream funding will increase by just 2.2%. This is estimated to leave a funding gap of around £700 million. (School Cuts coalition, 2025)**

**Read more:** [IFS Annual Report on Education Spending 2025/26](#)

**Read more:** [School Cuts Coalition data](#)

**Read more:** [Schools Week: funding storm preparing to crash into schools](#)



## Finance and Strategy

# Strategic Forecasting: Planning When the Ground is Moving

LA maintained schools must submit a three-year budget forecast each year between 1 May and 30 June. Academies face equivalent expectations from their trusts. But forecasting has never felt less certain than it does right now.

The Spending Review 2025 gave schools a clearer picture through to 2028/29. The headline was a £4.7 billion cash increase to the core schools budget by 2028/29, representing around 1.1% real terms growth per pupil, per year. The government described this as taking funding per pupil to its highest ever level. The IFS described it as keeping funding broadly flat in real terms, with any headroom likely to be absorbed by SEND cost pressures.

Both things are true. And navigating the gap between them is exactly the kind of work that sits on the desk of every school business leader right now.

What strong financial forecasting looks like in this environment:

- Model at least three scenarios: realistic, cautious and stress-tested. Assume SEND costs continue to grow.
- Do not wait for pay award announcements before updating your assumptions. Build in a range and revisit when confirmed.
- Pupil number trends matter more than ever. Falling rolls in primary schools across the region mean that per-pupil funding projections can shift significantly year on year.
- Governors and trustees need a narrative alongside the numbers. Forecasts without context do not support good decision-making.
- Assumptions should be evidenced, minuted and shared. This is not just best practice. It is protection.

The ASCL budget planning guidance, updated April 2025, remains one of the clearest practical references for working through 2025/26 assumptions. It covers known funding rates, pay assumption frameworks and how to structure your three-year forecast for governors.

Across the network, people are finding that the most useful thing is not the software or the spreadsheet. It is the conversation beforehand: what are we actually assuming, and why?

**Strategic financial planning requires making assumptions where there are known unknowns. This is necessary to present the most informed picture of the financial landscape. (ASCL, 2025)**

**Read more:** [ASCL Budget Planning Guidance 2025 \(PDF\)](#)

**Read more:** [What the Spending Review 2025 means for school budgets](#)

**Read more:** [DfE School Funding Statistics 2025/26](#)



## People and HR

### Workforce Challenges: It Is Not Just About Teachers

The headline story on school workforce has been about teacher recruitment. And there is genuine progress to report: secondary teacher training applications are up 12%, teacher vacancies are at their lowest level in five years in secondary schools, and the government remains on track to meet elements of its 6,500 teacher pledge. If you manage a secondary school, this is welcome news.

But for many school business leaders across the East Midlands, the workforce pressure that occupies most of their time is not about teachers at all.

It is about support staff.

Three-quarters of primary schools cut teaching assistant numbers last year, even as pupil need continued to rise. Stephen Morales, Chief Executive of ISBL, made the point clearly when the NIC pressures were announced: if the policy intention is to be more inclusive and narrow the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils, cutting support staff is working directly against that goal.

The government has committed to establishing a School Support Staff Negotiating Body, which is a recognition that recruitment and retention of support staff is a sector-wide problem. But until that body produces outcomes, schools are managing the gap on their own terms.

The NFER 2026 education workforce report, published this year, paints a complex picture. Teacher recruitment and retention are stabilising in secondary. But early years, further education, and support roles continue to face serious pressure. The report's central argument is that workforce policy needs to be targeted, not system-wide. A single solution does not address the range of challenges across different settings.

Primary schools face an additional structural pressure: falling pupil numbers. The primary population peaked at 4.7 million in 2018/19 and has fallen by 172,000 since. Fewer pupils means less funding. Less funding means more difficult staffing decisions. For school business leaders managing primary schools or primary phases within a MAT, this is the tension that sits behind every conversation about the next year's staffing structure.

**Workforce pressures are not uniform. Issues such as staffing shortages, pay competitiveness, workload, and career progression vary significantly across different parts of the sector. (NFER, 2026)**

**Read more:** [NFER 2026 Education Workforce Report](#)

**Read more:** [DfE 6,500 Teachers Delivery Plan](#)

**Read more:** [House of Commons Library: Teacher Recruitment and Retention](#)



## Estates and Operations

### Estates and Sustainability: The Deadline Has Already Passed

September 2025 was the government's deadline for all schools in England to have a Climate Action Plan in place and a named sustainability lead appointed. That deadline has passed. If your school does not yet have both, it is worth knowing that progress is now being reported and visibility is increasing. Schools without a plan risk missing out on funding opportunities and may attract scrutiny.

The DfE published its Education Estates Strategy in February 2026, setting out a decade-long vision for the school estate. The commitments that matter most right now:

- The Great British Energy Solar Programme is working with 250 schools in 2025/26, backed by £100 million, to install solar panels, LED lighting and energy efficiency measures.
- Every school will be RAAC-free by 2029. Schools needing to be rebuilt will be in delivery before that deadline.
- 250 additional schools will be selected for the School Rebuilding Programme by early 2027. Responsible bodies can nominate now via GOV.UK.

The estimated cost of decarbonising the entire UK school estate is £16.3 billion. That number sits behind every decision about energy contracts, maintenance spending and capital investment.

The practical starting point is the DfE's free Sustainability Support for Education platform. It allows you to structure a Climate Action Plan step by step, filtered to your setting and where you are in the process.

The question coming up across the network: who actually owns this at your school, and do they have the time and resource to deliver it properly?

**In 2026, improving energy performance and reducing carbon emissions will no longer be optional considerations, but central measures of estate management effectiveness. (EM Magazine, 2025)**

**Read more:** [DfE Education Estates Strategy: A Decade of National Renewal](#)

**Read more:** [DfE Sustainability Support for Education](#)

**Read more:** [How UK schools will turn net zero ambitions into action in 2026](#)



## Professional Development

### Policy and Professionalisation: The Role Keeps Growing

The school business leadership role has never been more complex. More legislation. More compliance. More expectation. And still the same number of hours in the day.

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill is currently progressing through Parliament and will have direct implications for school operations. It includes provisions on school admissions, attendance, exclusions, SEND and the regulation of alternative provision. For SBLs, any Bill of this scope means reviewing existing processes, updating policies and, in many cases, re-examining how your school or trust is structured to deliver compliance.

The government is also progressing a SEND White Paper, expected later this year. Given that SEND is the biggest single cost pressure on school budgets, this is one of the most consequential pieces of policy in the sector's recent history. School business leaders should be tracking its progress closely.

On professionalisation, ISBL continues to develop the Professional Standards that underpin the role. The standards are recognised by the DfE as the key reference document for evaluating professional competency. They cover six disciplines: finance, HR, operations, governance, pupil and staff wellbeing, and support for curriculum delivery. ISBL is also adding a digital section to the standards, reflecting the growing expectation that school business professionals lead on technology strategy as well as operational delivery.

The DfE has also set out six digital standards that schools will need to meet by 2030, covering broadband, wireless networks, cyber security, digital leadership, filtering and monitoring. Meeting these standards will fall substantially on the shoulders of the SBL. If you have not already mapped your school against these standards, it is worth doing this year rather than leaving it to the final stretch.

What does this add up to? A role that is broader, more technical, more visible and more consequential than it has ever been. The case for formal recognition and ongoing CPD has never been stronger.

**ISBL is adding a new digital section to the professional standards. As technology advances, the need for school business professionals to lead on digital strategy grows alongside everything else. (ISBL, 2025)**

**Read more:** [ISBL Professional Standards](#)

**Read more:** [DfE Digital and Technology Standards for Schools](#)

**Read more:** [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill: progress](#)



## Technology and Innovation

### AI in Schools: Where Are We Actually Up To?

Half of all schools in England currently have no AI policy whatsoever. Two thirds have no policy specific to student use. That is what a National Education Union survey found in early 2026. The technology is already in schools. The governance has not caught up.

The DfE published its expanded AI guidance in June 2025: Generative AI in Education Settings. It is the most useful starting point available and it covers three things SBLs need to act on now. First, data protection. Personally identifiable student data must not be entered into open AI platforms such as ChatGPT or Google Gemini without proper configuration and a Data Protection Impact Assessment in place first.

Second, human oversight is not optional. AI produces inaccurate content. Under Keeping Children Safe in Education, a named person must sign off any AI-generated policy document before it is used.

Third, doing nothing carries its own risk. Ofsted has flagged the failure to engage with AI as a concern. Schools without a clear position are exposed to inconsistent practice, increased workload and legal risk.

For school business leaders specifically, the most practical applications right now are policy gap analysis (comparing existing documents against updated frameworks such as KCSIE), first-draft administration documents, and compliance queries. Schools report that AI can significantly reduce policy development time when used with proper human review.

The Chartered College of Teaching, in partnership with the DfE, offers a free certified assessment for school staff on safe AI use. It is worth doing as a team.

**49% of schools have no AI policy whatsoever. 66% have no policy specific to student use. The technology is already there. The governance has not caught up. (NEU, 2026)**

**Read more:** [DfE Generative AI in Education Settings guidance \(June 2025\)](#)

**Read more:** [NEU State of Education: AI 2026](#)

**Read more:** [Chartered College of Teaching: free AI assessment for school staff](#)

# NSPCC Learning<sup>1</sup>



# Want to help keep pupils safe?

**Sign up to our free safeguarding programme and help protect a generation of children.**

In the average primary school class, at least two children have suffered abuse or neglect. Together, we can change that.

Empower your students with our free, refreshed *Speak out, Stay safe* programme for primary schools across the UK. There are virtual assemblies, lesson plans, and face-to-face workshops delivered by NSPCC volunteers.



➔ **Sign up at [nspcc.org.uk/speakout](https://nspcc.org.uk/speakout)**

Also available in Welsh, BSL, and for children with additional needs.

# Fun times in the sunshine! \*

\*Sunshine not guaranteed, unfortunately.

# Summer of Fun

We are pleased to share an exciting opportunity for schools and nurseries to get involved in a meaningful and engaging fundraising initiative this summer. NSPCC Summer of Fun 2026 is a fantastic way to combine physical activity, wellbeing and fundraising, while supporting children across the UK.

## About the event

NSPCC Summer of Fun 2026 is all about getting children active, having fun and raising funds to support the NSPCC's vital life changing services, such as [Childline](#). This summer, make time for your pupils to enjoy the sun, take a break and have fun fundraising for other children. Any primary school or nursery can take part across the UK and Channel Islands. Everything is provided that is needed for a successful fundraising event.



## What's included

Fun free resources are available to download, including an activity sheet from Ant and Dec. Their Propa Happy Playtime Power encourages children to embrace the silliness and has game ideas that pupils can still be enjoying in years to come. These are fun, educational and designed to improve mood and to be a great mid-afternoon pick me up on a summer's day.

This event is a great fit for the PSHE curriculum focussing on improved physical and emotional wellbeing.

## Why take part

You can turn fun in the sun into pounds that will help protect children and support the NSPCC's direct work in schools like [Speak out](#), [Stay safe](#) and [Talk PANTS](#).

We know the summer term can be busy, with exams, phonics screening and many other demands. NSPCC's Summer of Fun offers a simple way to give children a break, while still supporting wellbeing and curriculum goals.

There is plenty of inspiration in the free resources, from outdoor games and creative activities to traditional play and rainy-day ideas. Schools can follow the suggested activities or create their own.

**[Sign up today](#) and don't miss out on what promises to be a great summer while helping to protect children from abuse.**

**Search NSPCC Schools Fundraising Ideas Summer of Fun to get started.**



## ABLE Masterclass

### Facilities Management and Safeguarding Solutions

Managing a school estate involves a level of technical knowledge that rarely gets taught anywhere. Most school business leaders pick it up through experience. Through receiving electrical testing reports full of terminology nobody has explained. Through getting three very different quotes for what sounds like the same job and not knowing which one to trust. Through trying to work out what is actually required by law and what is being oversold.

This masterclass is designed to close that gap.

The session will be delivered by Ben Tooms, Managing Director of Breedon Electrical Fire and Security Ltd. Ben works directly with schools across the region on electrical compliance, fire and security systems, and safeguarding infrastructure. He understands the technical requirements and the budget realities school business leaders are working within.



This is practical knowledge from someone who does this work in schools every day.



#### What the session covers

- Making sense of electrical testing reports, what the jargon actually means and what genuinely requires action
- How to get like for like quotations by knowing the right questions to ask any contractor
- Statutory testing requirements for fixed wire electrical testing, emergency lighting and fire alarm systems
- An introduction to lockdown systems and solutions, what is available and what schools should be considering now

You will leave with practical knowledge you can apply straight away and greater confidence in the compliance decisions that sit on your desk.

**Date: Wednesday 13 May 2026 Time: 9:30am to 12:30pm Location: Strelley Hall, Main Street, Strelley, Nottingham, NG8 6PE**

**Free for ABLE members. Enter your discount code at checkout. Details are in your membership email. Non-members: £75 plus VAT. Book now [here](#)**



## Operations

# School Food Standards Consultation: Have Your Say

The Department for Education has launched a consultation to update School Food Standards in England, aiming to ensure all children have access to nutritious food that supports their wellbeing and learning.

### What is changing

The proposed updates aim to:

- Increase fibre and reduce sugar
- Limit foods high in fat, sugar and salt
- Support healthier meals across the school day
- Ensure standards are inclusive and practical for schools

### Why it matters

Current standards are over 10 years old and no longer fully reflect today's nutritional guidance or challenges, including rising health inequalities.

These changes also align with the planned expansion of Free School Meals from September 2026, reaching over 500,000 more children.

### Your role

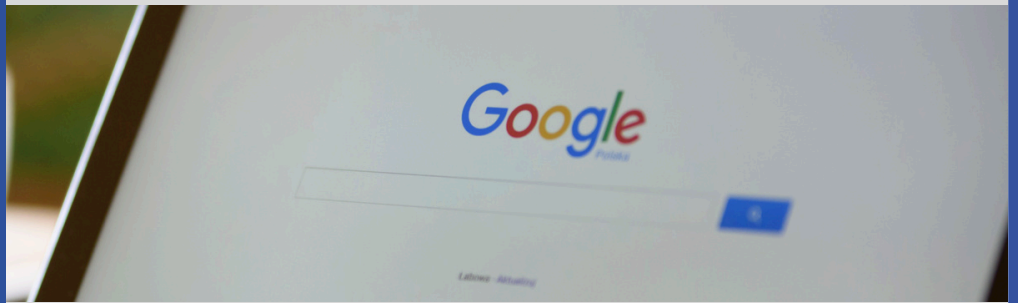
School Business Leaders play a key role in delivering these changes, from catering contracts to compliance and budgeting. Your input is important to ensure the standards are realistic and workable.

### Have your say

The consultation is open until 12 June 2026.

Read more and respond [here](#).

**At ABLE, we encourage members to take part and help shape a system that works for schools and supports every child.**



## Finance

# School Business Manager Summit with Google for Education

We are pleased to share a valuable opportunity that may be of interest to members.

Google for Education, in partnership with School Business Manager (UK), is hosting its first School Business Manager Summit on 8 May at Google's London HQ in King's Cross.

This free event is designed specifically for School Business Managers, CFOs and senior central teams, with a focus on practical insight, future product direction and meaningful peer networking.

### What to expect

- Insight into school operations and emerging technologies
- Opportunities to engage directly with the Google for Education team
- Dedicated time for networking with peers across the sector
- Breakfast, lunch and post-event networking included

With the growing use of digital tools across schools and trusts, this event offers both strategic value and the chance to connect at the heart of innovation.

### Key details

- Date: 8 May
- Location: Google London, King's Cross
- Cost: Free
- Eligibility: SBMs, CFOs and senior central teams (UK and Ireland)

Places are limited, so early booking is recommended.

Register your interest [here](#) (education email required)



## Wellbeing

### Supporting Staff Wellbeing in Schools

Following discussions at the recent national network leaders forum, wellbeing continues to be a key focus across the sector. In response, the DfE wellbeing policy team has shared a range of resources to support schools and trusts.

#### Key resources

- [Education Staff Wellbeing Charter](#)
- [Improve workload and wellbeing for school staff](#)
- [Education Support](#)



These resources offer practical support to help schools review workload, strengthen wellbeing approaches and embed sustainable practices across their organisations. This includes guidance on flexible working, workload reduction and support at different career stages.

The Improve Workload and Wellbeing service has seen strong engagement, with over 100,000 views over the past year, and continues to expand with new resources added regularly.

#### What this means for schools

There is a continued focus on:

- Promoting sustainable workload practices
- Embedding wellbeing into school culture
- Supporting leaders, including access to funded professional supervision

Schools and colleges are encouraged to sign up to the Wellbeing Charter and take advantage of the available support.

**At ABLE, we recognise the pressures School Business Leaders face and the vital role they play in supporting staff wellbeing across their organisations. Sharing and accessing resources like these can help create more sustainable and supportive environments.**

# Atom IT

## Get a new instant quote online, for simple, tailored IT Support from Atom IT

At Atom we support the people who use technology to teach, learn and manage in schools. The IT systems and services you use every day are critical to the daily operation of your school, and can often seem complex, bewildering and frustrating!

### **We've tried to simplify things...**

New procurement rules that were adopted in February 2025 mean that you now need to examine the value you receive from your IT supplier. DfE guidelines, cybersecurity requirements and closer Ofsted inspection of KCSIE standards are all increasing the demands on your IT provision - and your budget.

Atom aren't the cheapest provider, but we do believe we're the best value, and may well be cheaper than your current provider. You'll never know unless you take a look...

Access the quote tool via the button below. You won't be asked for any information or required to register or log in.

Please read the info to select your options. You can print the quote or ask us any questions as you work through it.

NB - if you use the contact us icon on the top right of the quote you'll have to enter your name, email address and organisation, so we know who you are.

***Online Quote***

# Atom IT



**ATOM IT**  
SUPPORTING  
OUR  
SCHOOLS  
WHEN THEY  
NEED IT  
MOST

## **STOP**

Paying extra every time you have an emergency  
Managing multiple contracts for support, broadband, anti-virus, device procurement/leasing and Microsoft licensing  
Worrying that your current provider has no-one to back them up  
Waiting....

## **START**

Relying on an Engineer who'll always turn up when you need them  
Feeling safe in the knowledge that you have a whole Team looking after you  
Getting the best advice about your IT now, and plan a way forward with Atom

Calling Atom... **0800 907 8609**



**BREEDON**  
Electrical Services



**BREEDON**  
Fire & Security

# BREEDON



LED Lighting  
Emergency Lighting  
Fixed Wire Testing  
Data Cabling  
General Electrical

Fire Alarms  
Intruder Alarms  
Access Control  
CCTV  
Automated Gates

12a Bridge Court, Hucknall Lane, Bulwell, Nottingham NG6 8AJ

T: 0115 701 2078

E: [Info@breedonelectricalservices.co.uk](mailto:Info@breedonelectricalservices.co.uk) W: [breedonelectricalservices.co.uk](http://breedonelectricalservices.co.uk)

**EDUCATION • COMMERCIAL • INDUSTRIAL**

# The benefits of a whole trust wellbeing approach

Written by Andy Mellor, SAS Wellbeing Director

The benefits of a wellbeing focused approach in the development of a sustainable wellbeing school culture are now clear. Our own data shows us that when our schools use the fabulous wellbeing services that we provide, we can together reduce absence rates by as much as 17%.

However, when you embed an approach which supports staff reactively with a proactively created sustainable wellbeing culture, we change the game completely. We don't wait for staff to need these reactive services; we embed an approach that is proactive and says, "this is the way we do things here to prevent our staff being sick or needing to take time off."

In my book "The Wellbeing Effect" which is available to order from Amazon and published in September, I chart the impact that a school wide wellbeing culture had on one particular school in a challenging area of the country. The approach saw the school move from requires improvement to outstanding in just over 2 years, but we saw the impact in the health and wellbeing of the staff and students, which created autonomy, engagement, and motivation.

The more I researched my book, the more I came across other schools who were doing the same, often through the necessity to try something different as they saw previous approaches as damaging to both staff and students.

Imagine an approach that raised standards for all learners and saw "disadvantaged groups" make more progress than their peers. Imagine that this approach also improved the motivation, autonomy, professional wellbeing, and fulfilment of all staff and saw learners engaged and poor in-class behaviour reduce. Too good to be true? All of the above has happened and is happening in certain schools across the country.

These schools automatically become employers of choice. Staff enjoy working there and want to work there. Retention is not an issue and adverts for posts in the school receive high quality applications from professionals who want to work in this culture.



Andy Mellor, SAS Wellbeing Director

Of course, as with any other school improvement initiative, this approach needs leadership, it needs the courage to try something a little different which meets the needs of your school community. It also needs leaders who role model the behaviours that they want to see in their staff.

My experience over 20+ years in school leadership suggests that appetite for change and a new way to work that achieves all of these benefits, isn't the problem. The problem is often that school and leaders aren't sure where to start.

What do we do first? What does good look like? How do we know when we've achieved it? All of these questions can create barriers to even getting started meaningfully.

This is why we have created our own 6 step plan, which I as National Wellbeing Director, work through with our schools. Our plan addresses all of these questions and many more and is available with one of our absence insurance policies and shortly we will be taking this resource online for individual SAS client schools to be able to access.

However, where this approach works really well is when groups of schools in trusts get involved in the programme.



We have had considerable success with a sizeable number of trusts who have decided that they'd like to work through this programme.

Some trusts have asked me to present to their headteacher groups, with an indication that maybe this is something that their heads might want to get involved in. Others have said "we're doing this as a trust in all of our schools."

Essentially, we work with trust and governing boards to really unpack what it looks like to support and challenge schools in the area of wellbeing. We support leaders in the school with an understanding of their own wellbeing and the extent to which the job draws on their own wellbeing reserves and how sustainable their work patterns are long term. The report that is generated rarely provides any shocks, but leaders appreciate the time to reflect on their own wellbeing.

We then plan with leaders and the staff and students to create a plan for wellbeing. We use survey data to create a baseline for this plan and then revisit the survey 6 months later to look at progress made towards the aims of the plan.

What this does is to create a strategic narrative which is useful for governors, useful for senior leaders, staff and students and allows governors and leaders to talk consistently and knowledgeably about the effectiveness of their work in this area with the inspectorate. MATs are perfectly shaped to take advantage of this work, as a nuanced approach allows schools within the MAT to create their own plan based on their own community needs and journey so far, whilst sitting within the overarching principles agreed by the MAT leadership and trust board.

Imagine an approach that, trust wide sees standards of attainment and progress rise whilst at the same time seeing staff and student wellbeing improve. An approach which sees your trust develop a reputation for being a great employer where wellbeing is central and that the potential of all within the trust community is maximised, leading to happy, motivated, and fulfilled staff.

This is what is on offer to the trusts with SAS absence insurance policies at no additional cost. We do this because we are invested in making a difference for schools and trusts.

We put our money where our mouth is to make a difference.

If you would like to come on this journey, then please do contact us.

**01773 814400**  
[schooladvice.co.uk](http://schooladvice.co.uk)



## More than Staff Absence Insurance

Schools Advisory Service are the UK's #1 Staff Absence Insurance provider. Working along-side schools and industry leaders since 1997 to build solutions that make a difference in schools.



**17%** ↓ On average, schools with SAS see a 17% reduction to absences

## Preventing Absence whilst Protecting Budgets

SAS Policies deliver comprehensive wellbeing services along-side our Staff Absence Insurance protection.

### Key services included:



#### On-site Nurse Visit

An annual HealthScreening of staff's general health in school by one of our nurses.

#### Leadership Supervision



Supporting leaders build the foundations for wellbeing-first cultures in schools.



#### 24/7 GP Support Line

Rapid response for health concerns for staff and their family.



#### Unlimited Counselling

No limit to how many staff can access counselling with additional sessions may be given if required.



#### Nationwide Physiotherapy

Book physiotherapy at a clinic close to you, with additional support to ease discomfort.

Plus more!

### Services Delivered by Our In-House Team of Experts

Our experts work alongside staff to provide additional support and deliver regular online sessions for staff to join. Our experts can also attend on-site to deliver sessions to staff.



Andy Mellor  
Leadership



Ethan Gordan  
Counselling



June Brade  
Mindfulness &  
Relaxation



Gareth Tattum  
Fitness &  
Nutrition



Mandy Dowsing  
Nurse Support



Mike Hodgson  
Physiotherapy

## Unrivalled Support for Your School Community



Product of the Year Winner 2025

Staff confidentially access services via our app or by calling our team



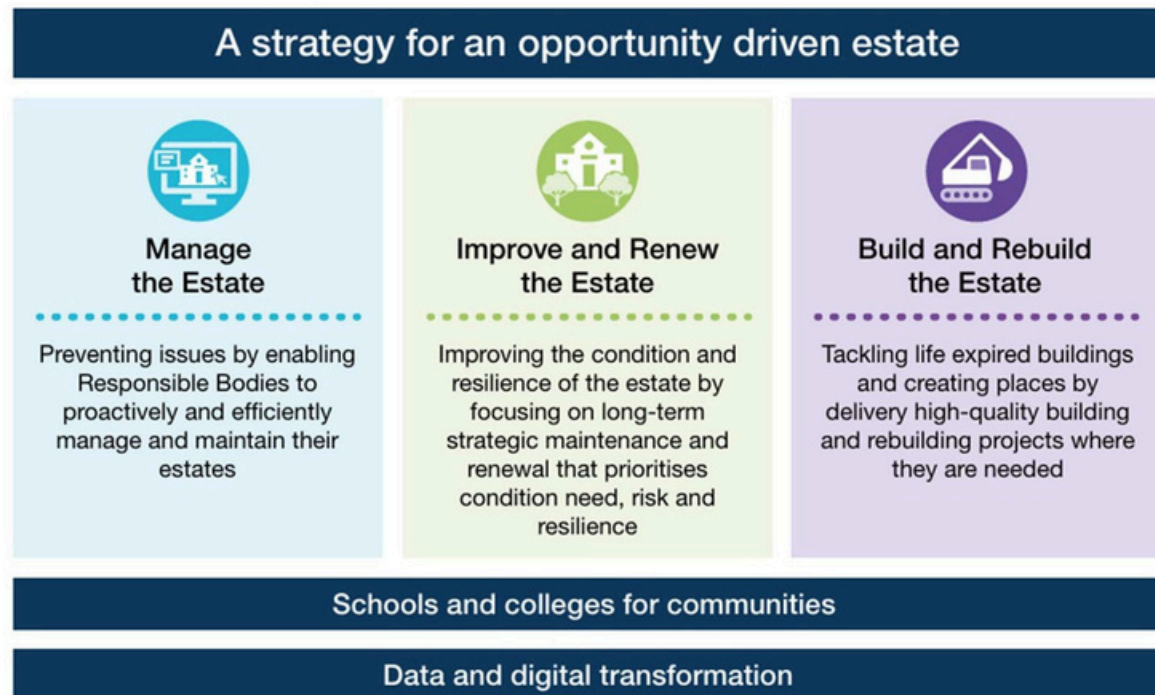
Discover more

01773 814400 | [schooladvice.co.uk](https://schooladvice.co.uk)

TriggHouse, Maisies Way, South Normanton, Derbyshire, DE552DS  
Schools Advisory Service is a trading name of Sovereign Risk Management Limited authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority No: 309701  
Registered in England and Wales Company No: 03475198. ICO licence No: Z8122086. SAS387 VI

## Why Commission a Condition Survey?

In February 2026, the DfE launched its [Education Estates Strategy](#) promising a decade of national renewal to address the well documented condition issues affecting the education sector estate. The strategy is structured around three pillars as illustrated below:



The [Good Estate Management for Schools \(GEMS\)](#) and subsequent [School Estate Management Standards \(SEMS\)](#) "requires that you have up-to-date data on your school or college buildings and estate through a condition survey." The DfE have also launched guidance on how to ['Improve and renew your long-term estates plan'](#) with a key step being to 'assess the condition and urgent risks of your estate.'

This is now also accompanied by specific guidance for Responsible Bodies on ['Commissioning a condition survey'](#) ahead of new Technical Standards being published later in 2026. Providing a 'Standard condition survey template' the DfE state that regular condition surveys help you to:

- assess and understand the physical state and level of deterioration of a building
- plan more appropriate maintenance strategies and accurate building investments

It is recommended that you should commission a comprehensive condition survey at least every five years but also acknowledges that more frequent inspections may be needed if concerns arise between planned cycles. Also, a survey should not be a 'compliance' exercise and 'sit on the shelf' – it provides important data and evidence for your estates plan and the allocation of capital funding.

The DfE also closely define a condition survey as being a visual, non-intrusive inspection by an independent and qualified professional. MAC employs highly experienced Chartered Surveyors to undertake such surveys and in addition, we work with Chartered Building Services (M&E) specialists to review these installations in school and academy settings.

MAC are very well placed to respond to the DfE's guidance on condition surveys and our team's experience, scope of service, spatial coverage and reporting format all fully align with these new standards.

# MAC

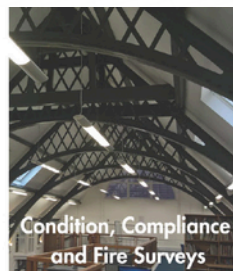
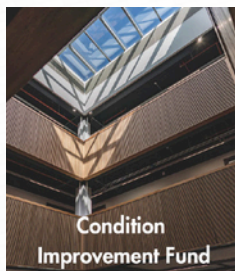
CONSTRUCTION CONSULTANTS

**MAC has worked with more than 500 schools and academies nationally providing strategic estates management services and advice on all aspects of construction projects.**

With office bases across the UK and multi-disciplinary expert teams, we aim to support our clients to manage their estate in line with the 'Good Estate Management' principles outlined by the DfE.

Our team has an excellent understanding of working with schools and academies and we are committed to securing the best possible outcomes for children and young people through delivering essential improvements to the learning environment.

## Our Services



If you need further information or a free initial consultation, please get in touch!



**Jonathan Jones BSc (Hons) MA, MCIOB**

Director, National Education Services

T: 07943049754

E: [jonathanjones@macconsultingltd.com](mailto:jonathanjones@macconsultingltd.com)



ABLE is organised by a committee of volunteer educational professionals and supported by select partner companies as a non-profit organisation, to connect school business leaders across the East Midlands through shared experience, practical support and peer community.



**Director**  
**Frances Rowland**

[E: director@able-pro.co.uk](mailto:director@able-pro.co.uk)



**Exhibitions & Partnerships**  
**Clare Stokes**

[E: exhibitions@able-pro.co.uk](mailto:exhibitions@able-pro.co.uk)



**Chair**  
**Emma Cripwell**

[E: chair@able-pro.co.uk](mailto:chair@able-pro.co.uk)



**Business Manager**  
**Alfie Costello**

[E: businessmanager@able-pro.co.uk](mailto:businessmanager@able-pro.co.uk)



**Finance Support**  
**Neil Beeson**

[E: finance@able-pro.co.uk](mailto:finance@able-pro.co.uk)



**Business Network Training**  
**Varinka Strong**

[E: training@able-pro.co.uk](mailto:training@able-pro.co.uk)

ABLE memberships are subsidised by the fees paid by our corporate partners and exhibitors. Without them all costs would be passed onto our members.



**Ruth  
Humphries**



E: [ruth@uk-sas.co.uk](mailto:ruth@uk-sas.co.uk)



**Gary  
Hardy**  
**Atom IT**

E: [gary@atomit.co.uk](mailto:gary@atomit.co.uk)



**Ben  
Tooms**



E: [ben@breedonelectricalservices.co.uk](mailto:ben@breedonelectricalservices.co.uk)

## Are you sociABLE?

Follow us for the  
latest news and  
updates



[@ablepro](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ablepro)