

School Leaders' Guide to Wellbeing Bill

24 March 2025



When the *Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill* was introduced in March 2025, its headline goal was ambitious and necessary: break the link between background and life outcomes for young people. But beneath the policy promise lies something even more important for school leaders to understand: this isn't just a social care reform—it's a major shift in how schools are expected to engage with wellbeing, safeguarding, and inclusion.

For leaders in schools and trusts, this Bill isn't something to watch passively—it's something to plan for actively.

Education is Now Central to Safeguarding

The Bill places schools right at the heart of multi-agency safeguarding. For the first time, education settings must be included in local safeguarding arrangements—not optionally, but by law.

This means:

- Schools will have formal representation in operational and strategic safeguarding boards
- Their input will shape decisions on local child protection priorities
- Safeguarding partners (local authorities, police, and health) will be required to ensure education is meaningfully engaged

This is about recognising the crucial front-line insight schools bring when it comes to spotting concerns, identifying need early, and protecting children before crisis hits.

Curriculum, Pay and Conditions: A Shift for Academies

Academy trusts will be expected to follow a reformed National Curriculum and adopt a new legal duty to align teacher pay and conditions with the national School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document.

This levels the policy playing field between academies and maintained schools—and could influence everything from staff retention to school improvement strategy. School leaders should begin reviewing their internal HR and curriculum planning now to anticipate compliance needs.

Free Breakfast Provision and Uniform Affordability

Two clear changes are on the way that will directly affect pupil access and inclusion:

- Free breakfast clubs will be required in all primary schools in England
- Schools will need to limit the number of branded uniform items they mandate, in an effort to reduce the cost of attendance for families

These changes are designed to remove small but powerful barriers to learning—and schools will need to assess how their current policies align.

Children Not in School: A Duty to Track and Support

The Bill introduces mandatory CNIS (Children Not in School) registers, requiring more robust coordination between schools and local authorities to track children not in formal education. It also introduces consent requirements for home education in certain safeguarding circumstances.

The intent is to close gaps where children fall out of sight, ensuring they are always visible to the systems designed to protect and support them.

New Powers and Expectations for Local Authorities

From requiring Virtual School Heads to support children with social workers or in kinship care, to introducing “Staying Close” support for care leavers up to age 25,

the Bill ensures more consistent care for vulnerable young people. These changes mean schools will likely be working more closely with:

- Virtual School Heads
- Family Group Decision-Making coordinators
- Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams

This creates new opportunities for early intervention, better information sharing, and more consistent support for at-risk learners.

No Longer Just Compliance—Now It's Co-Leadership

What's clear is that this Bill moves schools from being responders to being strategic partners in safeguarding and wellbeing. And that brings both responsibility and influence.

As a school leader, now is the time to:

- Engage with your local safeguarding board or partnership
- Review attendance and inclusion strategies through a wellbeing lens
- Prepare for policy shifts around staffing, curriculum, and school operations
- Begin conversations about how your school supports care-experienced children and kinship families

This is more than ticking boxes—it's about reshaping how the education system holds and supports its most vulnerable children.

Need Support Navigating These Changes?

At *The School Supply Network*, we're supporting school leaders to:

- Understand the implications of the Bill
- Engage in multi-agency planning and procurement conversations
- Align school operations with new statutory duties in a manageable, strategic way