


The Schools Bill – law no more

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12 December 2022  Katie Michelin

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As explained in [our previous briefings](#), as well as introducing a new set of standards for academy trusts and new statutory intervention powers, the Bill originally covered matters including attendance, independent school regulation and schools with religious character and as such, it represented a significant piece of legislation for the sector.

“Recent Turmoil...”

In addition to the controversy in the summer surrounding the Bill (and its subsequent stripping), the more recent turmoil and shifts within government have led to the Bill’s abandonment; the parliamentary time the Bill was once promised has been redirected.

Despite this, the government has been keen to stress that certain areas of the Bill will still be implemented, if not in law.

Continuing policy priorities

The education secretary has made clear that the pulling of the Bill does not equate to abandonment of the principles and policy agendas laid out in the [White Paper](#) published in March 2022.

The messaging is that many of the ambitions set out in the White Paper can be implemented without the use of legislation. We have again been reassured that those parts of the Bill focussing on academy standards and powers of intervention will still be a key focus for the Government, although in the absence of new legislation, this policy will surely be confined by the existing, somewhat muddled, legislative and contractual framework.

One piece of White Paper policy not reliant upon the Bill is the measure relating to “schools not making necessary improvements”. The government was able to rely on the existing “coasting school” regulations meaning that this intervention power has been in force since September 2022, notwithstanding the status of the Bill.

Strong trusts and coasting schools

The academies regulation and commissioning review will continue. [The advisory group](#) who have been carrying out an internal policy review as a follow-on from the White Paper’s proposals, will apparently now have a more centralised focus on the question of how a “strong trust” is defined.

The government has also reaffirmed its commitment to legislate to remove barriers for faith schools joining trusts.

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