

• EDUCATION · GUIDE

The skills matrix *for* *education teams*

A school carries two duties at once: every child must be taught well, and every child must be safe. That means tracking two things across the staff, who can teach and cover each subject, and whether everyone is current on the statutory training, safeguarding, first aid, SEND, that inspection and the law demand. A skills matrix holds both, so nothing critical slips between a timetable gap and a lapsed certificate.



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Reading time 12 min · **Method** Upleashed 0 to 5 capability framework · **Updated** May 2026

THE SHORT ANSWER

An education skills matrix maps staff against two things: the subjects and phases they can teach and cover, scored on a clear scale, and the statutory training, safeguarding, first aid, SEND, fire, Prevent, tracked as current, due or expired. Read it for teaching cover and for compliance, because a school must deliver the curriculum and prove its staff are safe and trained. In short: **it shows who can teach and cover what, and whether every member of staff is current on mandatory training, so neither a timetable gap nor a compliance lapse catches you out.**

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Two duties, one matrix.** Teaching capability and statutory compliance both matter in a school, so the matrix tracks both together.
- **Safeguarding is non-negotiable.** Statutory training like safeguarding and first aid must be current across all staff; a lapse is a serious risk.
- **Subject cover keeps the timetable running.** Knowing who can teach and cover each subject protects lessons when staff are absent.
- **Compliance is audit-ready, or it is a finding.** Inspectors expect proof that every member of staff is trained and current.
- **Track currency, not just completion.** Statutory training refreshes on a cycle, so a date once attended is not the same as being current today.

— [START HERE](#)

A school tracks teaching *and* safety

An education skills matrix is shaped by the fact that a school answers to two duties at once. It must deliver the curriculum, which means knowing who can teach and cover each subject, and it must keep children safe and meet the law, which means knowing that every member of staff is current on statutory training. The matrix is where those two pictures sit side by side.

Teaching and cover capability

The first half is **teaching capability**: which subjects and phases each member of staff can teach to standard, and, just as important, who can *cover* a class at short notice. Mapping this protects the timetable. When a teacher is absent, the matrix shows instantly who can step in for maths or science without dropping the standard, turning cover from a morning scramble into a quick, confident decision.

Statutory training and compliance

The second half is **statutory compliance**, and in a school it is not optional. Safeguarding and child protection, first aid, SEND awareness, fire safety, Prevent and data protection all carry mandatory training that must be kept current and refreshed on a cycle. These are not quality niceties; they are legal and inspection requirements, and a lapse is a genuine risk to children and to the school. The matrix tracks each as current, due or expired, so compliance is visible, not assumed.

Currency, not just completion

The crucial discipline in the compliance half is to track **currency, not completion**. Statutory training refreshes on a schedule, so the fact that someone once attended safeguarding training tells you little; what matters is whether they are current *today*. A matrix that records the date a certificate was earned, and therefore when it expires, turns a pile of CPD records into a live, audit-ready view of exactly who is compliant and who needs a refresher booked.

— WHY IT MATTERS NOW

A lapse is a *safeguarding risk*

In a school the stakes of an unseen gap are unusually high: a child unsafe, an inspection finding, a class without a qualified teacher. Tracking teaching cover and statutory compliance together is how a school sees all three coming, and proves it has them in hand.

8%

GARTNER, 2024

of organisations have reliable workforce skills data, so most schools track training in scattered spreadsheets.

39%

WEF, 2025

of workers' core skills are expected to change by 2030, as curriculum, technology and safeguarding guidance evolve.

85%

WEF, 2025

of employers plan to prioritise upskilling, and in schools CPD and statutory refreshers are central to that.

The two halves carry different but equally serious risks. On **compliance**, a lapsed safeguarding or first-aid certificate is not a paperwork slip; it is a gap in the school's duty of care and an immediate inspection concern, because the expectation is that every member of staff is trained and current. On **teaching**, an unmapped subject means a class without proper cover when a teacher is off, and the disruption that follows. A skills matrix that holds both, who can teach and cover each subject, and who is current on every statutory item, turns these from anxieties into a clear, managed, audit-ready picture.

— WHAT IT PROTECTS

Four things an education matrix safeguards

In a school, a skills matrix protects four things that carry real weight, in safety, in standards, and in inspection. Each is a direct return on keeping it current.

PROTECTS 01

Child safety & compliance

By tracking who is current on safeguarding, first aid and the other statutory items, the matrix protects the school's duty of care, the first responsibility of all.

PROTECTS 02

Curriculum delivery

It shows who can teach each subject and phase to standard, so the curriculum is staffed by people genuinely capable of delivering it.

PROTECTS 03

Cover resilience

It reveals who can cover each subject at short notice, so an absence does not leave a class without competent teaching.

PROTECTS 04

Inspection readiness

A current matrix is the evidence an inspector expects: proof that staff are trained, current and capable across both teaching and statutory duties.

The thread connecting all four is that, in a school, **capability and compliance you cannot evidence are a risk you cannot manage**. A safeguarding certificate that lapsed unnoticed, a subject only one teacher can cover, are exactly the gaps that surface at the worst moment, in an incident or an inspection. The matrix is the single place where teaching capability and statutory training meet, turning scattered CPD records and informal knowledge of "who can cover" into one clear, current answer to whether the school is safe, staffed and ready.

— THE SCALE BEHIND THE SCORES

The 0 to 5 capability framework

The teaching half of an education matrix needs a clear scale, while statutory training sits alongside as a current-or-not status. This framework, developed by Dr Alex J. Martin-Smith, provides the scale. Level 3, teaches the subject unsupervised to standard, is the line for genuine cover.

0

Not required for the role EXCLUDED

The subject or phase is not part of this person's role, for example A-level physics for a primary teacher. Excluded from their score, not counted as a gap.

1

In training / Developing WEIGHTING 25%

Learning to teach the subject, works with support or a mentor. Up to 75% of the way to confident delivery, for example a trainee or an ECT taking a new subject.

2

Emerging WEIGHTING 50%

More than 75% there. Can teach the subject in normal conditions and can cover a class, but complex groups or topics still benefit from support.

3

Capable WEIGHTING 75% · TEACHES UNSUPERVISED

Teaches the subject to standard, unsupervised, across the normal range of classes. The level that genuinely counts as being able to teach and cover that subject.

4

Subject lead / Mentor WEIGHTING 100%

Deep subject expertise; leads the subject, mentors colleagues and shapes the curriculum for it. Your subject leads and heads of department. Reconfirm if unused for a period.

5

Strategic ownership / Leadership WEIGHTING 100%

Sets curriculum and teaching standards across the school, with whole-school impact. The purple flag marks senior leaders and curriculum leads.

Teaching on the scale, compliance alongside

Teaching is scored 0 to 5, and the weightings, Level 1 = 25%, 2 = 50%, 3 = 75%, 4 and 5 = 100%, with 0 excluded, give a capability figure. Statutory training is tracked separately as a status, current, due or expired, because a certificate is not a level: it is either in date or it is not. For each subject, read coverage (how many are Level 3+); for each statutory item, read compliance (what share of staff is current).

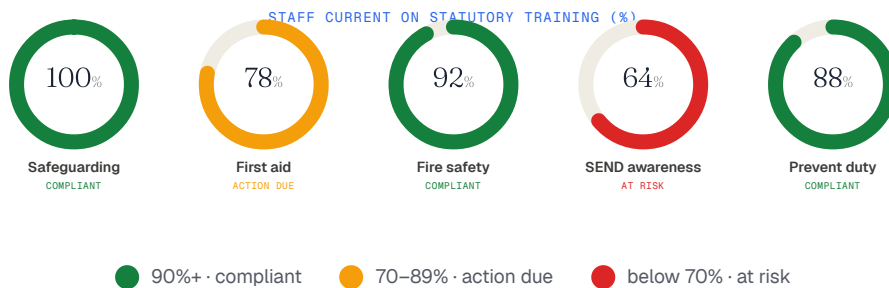
A worked example. Why completion is not the same as currency:

First aid trained staff all attended at some point → looks fine
but currency → only **78%** hold an in-date certificate; the rest have lapsed
compliance = **78%, action due** – book refreshers before it becomes a finding.

— [SEE THE COMPLIANCE](#)

Statutory training, *at a glance*

Here is the compliance half of an education matrix shown as gauges: for each statutory training item, the share of staff who are currently in date. Green is compliant, amber means refreshers are due, red is a real risk. In one glance, a head sees exactly where the school is audit-ready and where action is needed before an inspection, or an incident, finds the gap.



2

statutory items need action (SEND at 64%, first aid at 78%), with SEND the priority

Illustrative school. Each gauge shows the percentage of staff currently in date on that statutory training item, not merely those who once attended.

WHAT THE HEADTEACHER READS HERE

- **Safeguarding is fully current.** At 100%, every member of staff holds in-date safeguarding training, exactly where a school must be on its most critical statutory duty. No action, but watch the renewal dates.
- **SEND awareness is the priority.** At 64% it is below a safe threshold and flagged red. With SEND needs rising, this is the most urgent training to book, both for compliance and for the children it serves.
- **First aid needs refreshers.** 78% in date means around a fifth of certificates have lapsed. Not a crisis, but enough to book a refresher session before it becomes an inspection finding.
- **Currency is the whole point.** These figures count in-date certificates, not attendance ever. A "completed" record that has since expired is not compliance, which is why the matrix tracks dates, not ticks.

— READY-TO-USE EXAMPLES

Example things to map for a school

An education matrix should capture both teaching capability and statutory compliance. Here are ready-to-adapt categories, a starting point to tailor to your phase and setting.

Category	Examples to map (the columns)	Watch out for
Subjects & phases (0–5)	Each subject and key stage staff teach: maths, English, science, and so on	Recording "qualified teacher" once, not current capability per subject
Cover capability	Who can cover each subject at short notice, to standard	Assuming any teacher can cover any subject without dropping the standard
Statutory training	Safeguarding, first aid, SEND, fire safety, Prevent, data protection	Tracking attendance ever, not whether the training is current today
Roles & specialisms	DSL and deputies, SENCO, first aiders, exams officer, pastoral	Losing track of who holds a critical named role if they leave
CPD & development	Subject knowledge, behaviour, assessment, leadership development	Treating CPD as separate from the capability picture it should inform

Map the subjects and phases your staff teach, who can cover each, and every statutory training item tracked by its renewal date, since an out-of-date safeguarding or first-aid certificate is a compliance gap even when the member of staff is otherwise capable. Keep the named safety-critical roles, DSL, SENCO, first aiders, visible too. As always, map enough to be useful and few enough that it stays current through a busy term, because in a school a stale matrix can hide exactly the gap that matters most.

— AVOID THESE

Six mistakes on an education matrix

MISTAKE 01

Tracking attendance, not currency

A safeguarding course attended two years ago may have lapsed. Track renewal dates, so you see who is current today.

MISTAKE 02

Mapping only teaching

A matrix that ignores statutory training misses the school's first duty. Map compliance as carefully as capability.

MISTAKE 03

Assuming anyone can cover

Covering a class is not the same as teaching the subject well. Map who can genuinely cover each subject to standard.

MISTAKE 04

Losing the named roles

DSL, SENCO and first aiders are critical and often single-cover. Track them, and the cover behind them, explicitly.

MISTAKE 05

One "qualified" tick per teacher

A single qualified flag hides subject-by-subject capability. Score each subject and phase, not the teacher overall.

MISTAKE 06

Letting it go stale

Staff change and certificates expire every term. A matrix updated once a year cannot keep a school audit-ready.

— FROM SCATTERED RECORDS TO ONE VIEW

The method is free. A ready-made matrix just makes cover and compliance *obvious*.

Everything here works in a blank spreadsheet, and that is a fine place to start. A purpose-built template just makes the school view effortless: score teaching on the 0 to 5 scale and record each statutory item with its renewal date, and the subject coverage and the compliance percentages calculate themselves, so thin subject cover, the lapsing certificates and the items below a safe threshold stand out, before an inspection or an incident finds them.



The Advanced Excel Skills Matrix shows capability and coverage at a glance and tracks required levels and dates, the basis for combining teaching cover with statutory compliance, all on the same 0 to 5 framework used throughout this guide.

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— COMMON QUESTIONS

Quick *answers*

Q What is a skills matrix for education?

It is a grid mapping school staff against two things: the subjects and phases they can teach and cover, scored on a clear scale, and the statutory training, safeguarding, first aid, SEND, fire, Prevent, tracked as current, due or expired. It shows both teaching cover and compliance in one place.

Q Why track statutory training on the matrix?

Because in a school it is a legal and inspection requirement, not optional. Safeguarding, first aid and the other statutory items must be kept current across all staff, and a lapse is a genuine risk to children and a likely inspection finding. The matrix makes compliance visible and audit-ready rather than assumed.

Q Why track currency rather than completion?

Because statutory training refreshes on a cycle, so attending a course once is not the same as being compliant now. A matrix that records renewal dates shows who is currently in date and who needs a refresher booked, turning a pile of CPD certificates into a live, accurate compliance picture.

Q How does it help with cover?

By showing who can teach and cover each subject to standard. When a teacher is absent, the matrix shows instantly who can step in for that subject without dropping the standard, so cover becomes a quick, confident decision rather than a scramble, and you can see which subjects are thin on cover before it bites.

Q What should an education matrix include?

The subjects and phases staff teach and can cover, scored 0 to 5; the statutory training items tracked by renewal date; the named safety-critical roles such as DSL, SENCO and first aiders; and CPD and development. Map the vital items for both teaching and compliance, and keep the dates current.

Q Do I need software for an education skills matrix?

No. A well-built spreadsheet that scores teaching and tracks statutory-training dates works well for a school, and is where most should start. Software helps when you want compliance-refresh reminders, instant audit-ready reports and a live view across a large staff, with everything updating automatically as people train and renew.

— ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Alex is the creator of the Upleashed capability framework that powers Skills Matrix Template, the award-winning Excel skills matrix. A Chartered Manager with an MBA, an LLM and a doctorate in business administration, he has spent more than two decades helping operations, HR and quality teams turn capability from a gut feel into something they can measure, manage and prove.

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alex J. Martin-Smith".

Dr Alex J. Martin-Smith

— SOURCES

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Safe, staffed, and *ready*.

You now have the education method. The quickest way to start is to list your statutory training items this week, record who is current and when each expires, and map who can teach and cover each subject. The red gauges and thin subjects you find are exactly where to act before an inspection, or an incident, finds them first.

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