



BRENTWOOD DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE

*“Supporting Catholic schools to provide excellent education where pupils flourish,
and Christ is made known to all”*

June 2024

Dear chair

Here we are in the second half of the summer term, with this academic year speeding by. I hope you managed to take a well-earned break during half term, coming back refreshed for what is always a busy period in the school year.

With continued key challenges faced by schools and academy trusts and a general election on 4 July we can expect to see further changes to the educational landscape over the coming years.

This twice-termly chairs' mailing is part of our commitment to support you and keep you up-to-date with educational developments and good practice, both locally and nationally. I hope you find this summary useful.

Diocese of Brentwood News

Important Reminder about Reserved Posts

Reserved posts in a Catholic school are for the RE leader, Deputy Headteacher, some Assistant Headteacher posts, Head of School, Headteacher, Executive Headteacher and (CSEL)

It is a requirement for all reserved posts to have a priest's reference to confirm the catholicity of the candidate. This reference is taken up for shortlisting purposes; no one can be shortlisted without a positive priest's reference. Anybody who is going to name a parish priest on their application form should have first spoken to the priest about this and sought their permission to do so. The priest named should be the parish priest of the church where the candidate attends weekly, not of your school parish unless you go to Mass there weekly.

The definition of a practising Catholic for a reserved post is someone who attends Mass regularly ie **weekly** Mass attendance and on Holy Days of Obligation and who is in 'good standing with the Church' ie someone who lives their life in accordance with church teachings and can receive the sacraments. [The guidance document on 'Definition of a Practising Catholic for a Reserved Post' can be found here, as can the reference proformas used.](#)

Consultation on Lifting the Faith Cap and Opening Special Faith Based Academies
I am sure that you will have picked up the [press reports](#) about a government [consultation by DfE on lifting the 50% cap on faith-based admissions criteria](#) alongside proposals on opening special faith-based academies.

As you will be aware the Catholic church has been pressing for many years for the lifting of the 50% cap. We have also been working for some considerable time with

officials at the DfE to bring about a change in policy to allow for the Catholic non-maintained special schools to be able to become academies which will be possible if the consultation allowing the opening of special faith-based academies is successful. Clearly these changes would be great news for Catholic education. You will see the response from Bishop Marcus in the DfE press release as follows:

“These proposals are welcome. Dioceses are well placed to respond to differing local educational demands around the country, including the provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities. Parents can welcome this also.

Catholic education not only provides a high performing school sector and promotes the formation of children in values and virtues; it is more ethnically diverse than other schools, educates more pupils from the most deprived backgrounds, and builds social cohesion within our communities.”

As a Catholic community we need to make as many positive responses to this consultation as possible; we know that those who oppose these proposals will be working to achieve high numbers of negative responses and we will need as many positive responses as possible to counter this.

To aid with this the CES have prepared a response you can submit, (You can change anything you don't want to submit). Please follow the link below to do this.

The e-action response is now available on the Bishops' Conference website and can be accessed through the following link: <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/lifting-the-faith-schools-cap/>

Please take the time to do this and encourage others to do so too. Thank you.

Governing Body Effectiveness – annual reflection and self-review

An annual review of skills and regular self-evaluation and review of individuals' contributions to the governing body is essential to ensure the governing body continues to have the people and leadership it needs to remain effective. This is an important part of succession planning.

BDES has developed a [model self-review tool](#) which helps to assess the contribution of governors and to ensure the governing body makes best use of the skills of governors/trustees. You may like to use this or adapt it for use by your own governing body.

Headteacher Appraisal

Some of you will be setting objectives for your headteacher this term as well as assessing their performance and professional development needs. Effective oversight of the headteacher performance management process is one of the most important roles in the overall governance of the school and an essential part of driving school improvement.

Please ensure that governors appointed to undertake this crucial role are trained so they can effectively play their part as a member of the headteacher appraisal panel.

The Diocese has written a practical online course for governors serving on the headteacher appraisal panel as part of the Gift-ED library. If your school subscribes to Gift-ED it is recommended that the appointed governors complete this course.

Academy News

Congratulations to the following school which became an academy in a Diocesan Catholic Multi Academy Trust on 1 June 2024:

Our Lady of Grace Catholic Trust
St Michael's Catholic Primary School, East Ham

Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) weekly updates
ESFA's [weekly updates](#) provide useful information for trusts.

Governor Development

REVISED DATE: *Chairs' Forum (via zoom)*

This important termly event for chairs and vice chairs covers key topics as well as advice on recent Diocesan and National educational developments.

The next meeting will take place online on **17 June 2024** (16:30-18:00). We look forward to seeing you then.

Facilitators: Robert Simpson, Director of Education and Maria Shepherd, Deputy Director of Education. [To book your place please use this form](#)

NEW DATE: *Safeguarding Children (webinar for school governors)*

The next *Safeguarding Children* update will run as a webinar on **Monday 7 October 2024** (17:30-19:00). This will focus on the next KCSIE, due to be published in the autumn term 2024, and cover all the essential information needed to understand your statutory responsibilities. To [book a place please use this form](#).

Induction - Being an Effective Governor in a Catholic School

As well as in-school induction, it is important that new governors attend Induction training to gain confidence and knowledge of their role within a Catholic setting. Diocesan Induction training consists of two modules and the expectation is that governors attend both to complete their induction training. **Whilst it is preferable to attend Module 1 first, they can be done in any order.**

NEW DATE: Module 1: The Distinctive Nature of Catholic Schools – Monday 9 December 2024 (17:00-18:30)

This module explores the distinctive ethos of church schools and the role of governance within a Catholic setting. To [book a place](#)

Module 2: An Introduction to the Roles and Responsibilities of Governors – Monday 24 June 2024 (17:00-18:30)

This module will help governors gain confidence and knowledge of the 3 core functions of governance and share good practice. To [book a place](#)

Webinars on Premises Related Issues

Four webinars are being run next academic year on premises related issues. Please see details below and note the dates for your diaries:

NEW DATE: *School Building Premises Training – Autumn 1 - Asbestos Guidance – Responsibilities and Management*

This is running on **Thursday 26 September 2024 (16:00-17:30)** and is suitable for headteachers, school business managers and governors (maintained schools and academies). **Booking available soon.**

NEW DATE: *School Building and Premises Training – Autumn 2 – Statutory Compliance Guidance*

This is running on **Tuesday 19 November 2024 (16:00-17:30)** and is suitable for headteachers, school business managers and governors (maintained schools and academies). **Booking available soon.**

NEW DATE: *School Building Premises Training – Spring 1 - Using DfE Good Estate Management for Schools (GEMS) for Governance*

This is running on **Wednesday 22 January 2025 (16:00-17:30)** and is designed specifically for governors and trustees (maintained schools and academies). **Booking available soon.**

NEW DATE: *School Building Premises Training – Spring 2 – Schools Governance Responsibilities in Managing Asbestos*

This is running on **Tuesday 11 March 2025 (16:00-17:30)** and is for chairs of governors and governors with responsibility for premises issues (maintained schools and academies). **Booking available soon.**

Online Learning

Gift-ED

The Gift-ED library of online courses, supporting governors in their role, has been funded for 4 years but [there is now a subscription for this valuable training](#).

You will not be able to access Gift-ED courses without a subscription. **Does your school subscribe?** Completed order forms should be returned to info@anspear.com

Governor Recruitment

Foundation Governor Vacancies

Foundation governor vacancies are advertised through the Diocesan website. As well as running periodic foundation governor recruitment campaigns through the local parishes, we also work with *Governors for Schools* and *Inspiring Governance* (please note that the *Inspiring Governance* service ends in September 2024) to identify suitable governors for our schools.

We have asked clerks to make it clear where there are foundation governor vacancies so we can support schools in filling these positions. [If your school is not shown and you need support in filling a foundation governor vacancy](#) please get in touch.

Schools looking to recruit governors may also be interested in [our flyer](#) to distribute to parents and the local Catholic community. Get in touch if you would like a word version so you can adapt the flyer for your school.

Safeguarding News

Keeping Children Safe in Education for September 2024 (KCSIE)

DfE has published the [latest version of KCSIE \(for information only\) to come into force in September 2024](#).

Please remember that the 'for information' version may be subject to further changes. **so be cautious about making changes to school policies until the final version comes out.** In particular, there are two specific areas we know

are subject to change: preventing radicalisation, where new definitions are coming into force; and the guidance about gender-questioning children. The statutory consultation on RSHE may also have an impact.

Early Years Foundation Stage Safeguarding

DfE is [currently seeking views of professionals in the educational sphere, on proposed changes to safeguarding requirements in Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\)](#). These changes will affect the statutory framework within EYFS. The idea is to make safeguarding requirements in this arena more comprehensive for early years providers, to bolster pupil's safety in that crucial period.

Ofsted News

Deep and meaningful? The religious education subject report

Ofsted have published their [subject report on religious education](#). It makes for very interesting reading, and some of it is highly critical of the quality of religious education in general. While the report does not speak to religious education in Catholic schools, it is heartening that many of the criticisms they offer of the quality of religious education in other sorts of schools ought not to be true of Catholic schools. We anticipate this progress will continue as schools implement the RED and model curriculum.

Independent Review of Teachers' Professional Development: Phase 2 findings

Given current recruitment and retention issues, it is more important than ever that teachers have access to high-quality professional development, but [Phase 2 of Ofsted's latest independent review](#) has found that too many experienced and part-time teachers said they were still not getting a high-quality teacher development offer.

The data shows that, while the direct effect of the pandemic has significantly reduced, other barriers identified in their previous report have persisted, such as workload pressures and the costs of providing cover for teachers to attend training. These continue to prevent some teachers from accessing effective training and development opportunities.

The most effective schools used innovative ways of providing all staff with high-quality teacher development. These schools had invested in long-term strategic planning, which meant that they were providing staff with a coherent programme of development.



Reflect:

- Does your school provide all staff with a variety of opportunities, both internally delivered and externally sourced? How do you know this?
- Generally, early career teachers (ECTs) and staff studying for an NPQ were more positive about their recent professional development experiences. Is this the case in your school?
- What opportunities are there for staff to put their new knowledge into practice?

Subject Deep Dives during Ungraded Inspections

Sir Martyn Oliver, Ofsted's Chief Inspector has [announced changes to ungraded inspections](#). From September, inspectors will no longer conduct subject 'deep dives' during ungraded inspections, which are designed to check on standards in schools that already carry a good or outstanding grade. Instead, school leaders will have the opportunity to discuss their school's strengths and areas for development and inspectors will typically use extended learning walks to consider the impact of the curriculum and pupils' personal development. Safeguarding arrangements, behaviour and attendance will continue to be evaluated in the same way.

DfE News

RSHE Statutory Guidance Review

DfE has released [draft guidance on Relationships, Sex and Health Education \(RSHE\) content in schools](#) with the aim of ensuring it is appropriately and sensitively taught. The draft RSHE guidance will have a significant impact on how schools can help children stay safe online.

The draft guidance is now open to consultation, which closes on 11 July 2024. When final, the guidance will be statutory and schools will be expected to follow it. It sets out new expectations, including the age at which pupils can be taught sex education. You can find the [consultation form](#) here.

What Schools and Academies must publish online

DfE has updated their guidance on what [maintained schools](#) and [academies](#) must or should publish on their website.

There are a few changes, including:

- Within the curriculum section, you now need to publish details of your [music curriculum](#).
- There is more guidance about publishing pay gap data (mandatory if you have over 250 employees, good practice if fewer than 250)
- The reference to remote education says that you should publish information – previously it said “you should consider”.

Creating a school behaviour culture: Audit and action planning tools

DfE has published [audit and action planning tools](#) to help schools assess their behaviour culture, recognise good practice and identify areas that need attention.


Resources include an audit tool to facilitate the assessment of behaviour culture across the school; staff and pupil surveys; and an action planning tool which can be used to help develop a step-by-step plan for your school. The action planning tool should help schools implement and monitor the actions taken.

In addition to this, the DfE has compiled a [collection of resources](#) to help schools and trusts to develop, implement and maintain a behaviour policy that promotes a whole-school behaviour culture.

Attendance Data Update

Damian Hinds, the Minister for Schools, has [written to governors and trustees](#) to thank them for their contribution in improving school attendance.

The letter highlights the DfE data tools available to schools including new absence banding reports within the [monitor your school attendance tool as well as](#) the important role that governors and trustees play 'in overseeing the strategic response to attendance in schools, including the scrutiny of key performance and financial data'.

	<p>Reflect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How does your school monitor school attendance? How are attendance rates shared with governors?• Does data include attendance by year group and for SEND?• Are there any patterns or trends?• What strategies are in place to deal with persistent absentees?• What has been the impact of these strategies? What evidence do you have for this?
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Protective Security and Preparedness for Education Settings

New guidance on [protective security and preparedness for education settings](#) has been published by DfE. This non-statutory guidance provides advice to help educational settings become better prepared for and able to respond to terrorism and other major incidents.

The responsibility for safeguarding pupils, staff and school premises lies with governors and trustees, so governing bodies play a crucial role in ensuring that effective security measures and emergency response plans are in place.

Managing Older Buildings

DfE has published [new guidance](#) to help schools manage their buildings. This non-statutory guidance aims to help schools and trusts develop their knowledge of the types of construction commonly found on the school estate to help schools prioritise future maintenance and repair and to monitor the buildings for any early signs of deterioration. It should be used in conjunction with DfE guidance on [good estate management for schools](#)

Supporting the wellbeing of leaders of state-funded schools

DfE have reinforced the importance of [Supporting the wellbeing of leaders of state-funded schools](#)

Governors and trustees have a critical role to play in influencing the overall culture of the organisation – including ensuring that this produces a supportive environment for staff. In particular, governing bodies should give consideration to ensuring the school or trust fosters a supportive working environment where workload is managed, wellbeing is prioritised, and action is taken to support all staff.

They may also wish to consider designating a governor or academy trustee as a wellbeing champion to provide strategic support to the school leadership team as appropriate.

Latest Research and Resources

A Window Into Young Children and the Online Space - Ofcom

According to [Ofcom's annual study of children's relationship with the media and online worlds](#), 24% of 5 to 7 year olds own a smartphone.

If the definition of devices is widened to tablets, that figure rises to 76%. It goes without saying that as professionals in the educational space, we must remain with a finger on the pulse of trends among this very young grouping. Their formative experiences in the online world, may be crucial in determining their future attitudes.

This is particularly importance since a third of those surveyed use social media unsupervised. Profiles on social media sites can be found for those in that age bracket, which due to the nature of social media may be cause for concern.

Not in School: Mental Health Barriers to Attendance Report

The Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition and Centre for Mental Health (CYPMHC), has recently published [a report on the issue of school attendance](#). The report focused on investigating the mental health causes of absenteeism and produced recommendations across four key areas:

- Improving attendance measures
- A whole education approach
- Wider system support
- Addressing the underlying causes

Thank you for all that you do for your school.

Debbi Botham

Diocesan Governance Development Officer

Diocesan communications are issued solely to support you to carry out your education functions as a Catholic school leader on behalf of your diocesan bishop. They may contain sensitive information and must be respected as private communications and not be shared with any third parties external to the diocese without written BDES consent.