



BRENTWOOD DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE

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

Chairs’ News - September 2024

Dear Chair

Welcome back to the start of term. I hope that you managed to enjoy some time over the summer to refresh and relax to recharge your batteries for the forthcoming academic year.

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

Catholic School Inspection (CSI)

As you know, Catholic School Inspections in Brentwood Diocese commenced January 2023. Under the new framework no inspections can take place in the first 2 weeks of September or the first week of January so **inspections can commence from w/b 16 September 2024**. Inspection notification is 2 working days (including the day of the call) and inspections take place over a 2 day period. Therefore telephone notifications will take place on Mondays or Tuesdays with inspections on Wednesdays-Thursdays or Thursdays-Fridays.

It is vital that schools have their Catholic School Self-Evaluation documents ready as these will need to be sent to the Lead Inspector after their initial telephone call.

In order to assist schools, it has been decided to continue to give schools an indication of their ‘inspection window’.

Schools in the Diocese of Brentwood which were last inspected under Section ‘48 from - March 2018-November 2018 - can expect to be inspected under CSI between September 2024 and July 2025. (Please note this may be subject to change if inspection administration circumstances outside of our control dictate).

Diocesan Scheme of Delegation (September 2024)

Please see below the link to the new updated Diocesan Scheme of Delegation for Multi-Academy Trusts. (All documents are within the ‘Related links section of the page) <https://www.dioceseofbrentwood.net/departments/education/school-governance-2/>

This document has been updated following detailed discussion and consultation with MAT representatives. We enlisted the help, support and guidance of the diocesan solicitors, Winckworth Sherwood, in a process where we worked to capture existing

good practice. You will see that the Scheme of Delegation has been broken down in to separate sections for ease of access. The Scheme of Delegation is consistent with the Bishop's Memorandum of Understanding and also with the Diocesan Protocols that were produced with input from the Catholic Education Service. Any feedback on the new Scheme of delegation will be welcomed before the end of term and will be shared with the diocesan solicitors.

It is now the expectation of the Members that this Scheme of Delegation will be adopted by all Multi-academy Trusts and put on to each Trust website in September 2024.

The importance of professional clerks

It is important that full governing boards are clerked by a **governance professional** rather than a school employee such as a Secretary, PA or Business Manager. We understand that there is a cost implication but the governance professional carries out a significant role and where this is done professionally this will have real benefits for the governors as well as avoiding any suggestions of a conflict of interest.

As well as organising and minuting governing meetings and supporting the board with administrative tasks such as record keeping to make sure everything runs smoothly, a professional clerk makes an important contribution to the efficient and effective functioning of a governing board by providing expert advice and guidance on a range of statutory and procedural matters to ensure efficiency and compliance.

This includes working in partnership with the chair to keep the governing board focussed on its core strategic priorities and providing independent advice on governing body procedures, statutory guidance and policies and the annual tasks and decisions that need to be made. Further guidance and advice on this area is available from the NGA for those that subscribe.

Please note that this is something we will be following up with schools and academies to ensure that the highest standards are being maintained.

Updated Guidance on the right of withdrawal from religious education and/or collective worship in schools in England

The CES have made some amendments to the *Guidance on the right of withdrawal from religious education and/or collective worship in schools in England* document on the [CES website](#). The amendments include a general updating of the guidance, as well as the removal of references to the position in Wales whilst the phased roll out of the Curriculum for Wales is taking place. Please make sure you use the updated version.

Catholic Jubilee Year

The theme for the upcoming Jubilee is "Pilgrims of Hope". The 2025 Jubilee will begin in Advent 2024 and will run until the Feast of the Epiphany in 2026.

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.

Permanent Exclusions and suspensions

Governors serving on a panel to review the headteacher's decision to exclude a pupil may find this [checklist](#) useful.

Excluding a child from school is subject to statutory guidance and is a legal process. We would always advise checking latest DFE guidance to see if your letters are up to date. Here are quick links to the various guidance:

The DFE in August 2024 have made technical changes to the statutory guidance on exclusions in order to reflect new regulations on school attendance. It is important to ensure that the 2024 Guidance is being used.

[School suspensions and permanent exclusions](#)

<https://www.dioceseofbrentwood.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Checklist-for-Governors-Permanent-Exclusions.pdf>

[School complaints procedures: guidance for maintained schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Setting up an academies complaints procedure - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Jargon Buster

Are you confused by constantly changing education jargon? Education jargon is constantly changing and evolving and can be a cause of frustration, especially for new governors! To support you, we have updated our [jargon buster](#) which you may like to share with your governors.

Supporting new governors and trustees

Many of you will be welcoming new volunteers to your governing board at this time of year. A well-planned induction will help new governors and trustees feel welcomed into the school community and have the necessary information and support to fulfil their role with confidence and the Diocese has developed a [model Induction checklist](#) which you are welcome to use or adapt. Please note especially the importance of including safeguarding training as part of governor induction.

Governor Induction

It is vital that new governors feel welcomed into the school community and have the necessary information and support to fulfil their role with confidence. All governors share in the strategic responsibility of promoting high educational standards and ensuring the school is conducted as a Catholic school.

[BDES has developed a model Induction checklist](#) giving good practice examples of the key information and support that new governors in our Catholic schools should receive. Please feel free to adapt the checklist to meet the needs of your own governing body.

Academy News

New Academy Trust Handbook published

The Department for Education (DfE) has published [the new Academy Trust Handbook](#) (also known as the Academies Financial Handbook), which came into effect from **1 September 2024**.

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

Governor Development

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 Autumn term meeting will take place online on **Tuesday 22 October 2024** (16:30-18:00).

- The spring term meeting will take place face to face in Brentwood on **25 February 2025** (16:30-18:00). Booking available nearer the time.
- The summer term meeting will take place online on **17 June 2025** (16:30-18:00). Booking available nearer the time.

Facilitators: Robert Simpson, Director of Education and Maria Shepherd, Deputy Director of Education.

[To book your place](#)

NEW DATE: Safeguarding Children (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](#).

NEW DATE: Joining a Multi-Academy Trust (CMAT) – Your questions answered

In his [letter for Education Sunday 2021](#), Bishop Alan reflected on his firm belief that the best future for our schools is to work more closely together by joining Catholic Multi Academy Trusts (CMATs) to formally shape the Catholic education system in their locality.

This webinar on **Tuesday 15 October 2024** (17:30-19:00) is a short course intended to support governing bodies of Catholic maintained schools as they explore joining a Catholic multi-academy trust (CMAT) and provide the opportunity to ask questions.

The training will cover:

- Current position of CMATs in the Diocese
- Structure of CMATs & role of members/trustees
- Potential advantages and challenges of joining a CMAT
- Next steps

Facilitator: Stephen Adamson, Diocesan MAT Development Officer

[To book your place](#)

NEW: Preparing for Ofsted – 6 November 2024 (17:00-18:30)

It is important that governors and directors understand the process for Ofsted inspections and their involvement in ensuring the school is working under the

framework. This webinar gives an overview of the role of Ofsted, the criteria on which schools will be assessed and the expectations of governance.

By the end of the session governors and directors will be able to:

- Know the context of the inspection process
- Understand how governors can prepare for inspection and provide evidence of their impact on school improvement

Facilitators: Cathy McKenna, Secondary Schools Link Adviser and Grace Corry, Primary Link Adviser

[To book your place](#)

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 20th January 25 (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 your place](#)

NEW DATE: Role of Trustees in a Catholic MAT

This webinar on **Tuesday 11 February 2025 (17:30-19:00)** is a short course intended for those new to the trustee role within a Catholic MAT (CMAT) or as a refresher for trust boards as part of their ongoing training requirements.

The training will cover:

- What are the basics of good governance?
- How Trust Boards work
- The core functions of a Catholic multi academy trust board

Facilitator: Stephen Adamson, Diocesan MAT Development Officer

[To book your place](#)

NEW DATE: CSI for Governors

How do you as governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school, RE and collective worship, prayer and liturgy?

Important changes to the CSI Handbook came into effect in September 2024. This webinar on **Thursday 13 February 2025 (17:30-19:00)** will outline the key information for governors to develop their understanding of the Catholic School Inspection (CSI) process - so that they can effectively play their part in preparing for inspection and during inspection.

The aim of this course is to gain a greater knowledge and understanding of the role of governors in relation to the Catholic Life of the School, RE and Prayer and Liturgy:

- The distinctive nature of Catholic education
- Expectations in relation to Classroom RE
- Expectations in relation to Catholic Life
- Expectations in relation to Prayer and Liturgy

Facilitator: Maria Shepherd, Deputy Director of Education

[To book your place](#)

Webinars on Premises Related Issues

Four webinars are being run for governors and trustees 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 an important course for persons responsible for managing asbestos in schools and governors, particularly chairs of governors and those in H&S roles.

This course will explain what documentation schools need to have in place (Asbestos Management Plan and Register), the importance of processes to ensure those at risk from asbestos are provided information and sign that they have seen it. Clarity over who is responsible for managing asbestos in Diocese of Brentwood schools, how often to commission an asbestos resurvey and the required training for responsible persons and duty holders and where to access this. [To book your place](#)

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).

The course will explain how to use the [DfE's Compliance Excel spreadsheet](#) to ensure your premises comply with H&S regulations and are properly maintained. Using this spreadsheet will enable easy sharing of information with SLT, governors and diocese. [To book your place](#)

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).

This is an introduction for governors to a really useful government website "[GEMS](#)" that contains lots of great information to help ensure your school buildings are being properly developed and maintained. [To book your place](#)

REPEAT WEBINAR: 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). An important course for governors, particularly chairs of governors and those in H&S roles. This course will explain what documentation schools need to have in place (Asbestos Management Plan and Register), the importance of processes to ensure those at risk from asbestos are provided information and sign that they have seen it. Clarity over who is responsible for managing asbestos in Diocese of Brentwood schools, how often to commission an asbestos resurvey and the required training for responsible persons and duty holders and where to access this. [To book your place](#)

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 2024 (KCSIE)

Updates for KCSIE 2024 include:

- amending the definition of 'safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children' in line with Working together to safeguard children 2023
- additional information around when children may require early help, in accordance with the guidance in Working together
- a recommendation for school staff, governors and trustees to use the DfE Data Protection guidance for schools³ to understand data protection
- clarification that schools continue to be responsible for the safeguarding of pupils they place with an alternative provision provider.

Tips for helping children stay safe online - IWF / PIER

'Self-generated' child sexual abuse material (CSAM) has been the subject of research that PIER (Policing Institute for the Eastern Region) have just finished on behalf of the Internet Watch Foundation. 'Self-generated' CSAM are images and videos which are taken by children and then shared either:

- willingly, usually with a boyfriend/girlfriend, or
- unwillingly, through coercion, or
- shared by a third party without their consent.

Some of these images end up being distributed, sometimes sold, on the open and dark web by those with a sexual interest in children.

Just over 300 children took part in the research and talked about their experiences of growing up in a digital world, where they talk to their friends, game and do their schoolwork online. Many described receiving unwanted sexual images and some commented that it has become normalised and part of their lives. The apps they use, such as Snapchat and TikTok are also used by perpetrators to talk to children and groom them into sharing sexual images. This is a serious safeguarding issue, with wide-reaching consequences that we all need to learn more about.

PIER and IWF have written a [blog post for parents about how they can better understand their children's online world and its risks](#).

Ofsted News

Changes to ungraded inspections

Ofsted have published [a blog outlining the changes they will be making to ungraded inspections in the autumn term](#). The emphasis of ungraded inspections will be on providing school leaders with opportunities to demonstrate where they have improved and to discuss where they still have work to do. Because of this, from the autumn term onwards, Ofsted will no longer carry out deep dives during ungraded inspections. New inspection handbooks will be published in September 2024.

What will ungraded inspections look like now?

- The day before the on-site inspection begins, there will be an extended phone conversation with the headteacher. Through this conversation, the lead inspector will agree with the headteacher several areas of focus for the inspection
- The areas of focus will influence what inspectors do when they're in school. At least a couple of these areas will be related to the quality of education, but they won't focus on one subject and they won't be deep dives. Instead, inspectors will look at a group of subjects together. So, in a primary school, they're likely to look at early English and early mathematics together as a group so they can make sure that schools are getting these important basics right. Or they might look at a group of subjects from the wider curriculum. In a secondary school, there could be a focus on the core subjects and another focus on, for example, vocational subjects. There will usually be one or two other areas of focus too. These might be related to personal development, behaviour, attendance, or something that includes all of these. Again, these will be decided during the initial phone conversation and will be tailored to the school
- These inspections will focus more on a dialogue between headteachers and their senior leaders. Some of the conversations may be challenging, but these changes will allow for a proper conversation between professionals about the school's strengths, and its areas for improvement

DfE News

New Education Secretary

As you know, Bridget Phillipson has been appointed as Secretary of State for Education following the recent general election. Shortly after stepping into the role, she [wrote to all involved in Education](#) outlining how Labour aims to reset their relationship with the sector and that she is 'determined to drive change together'.

These are the changes announced so far:

A Children's Wellbeing Bill and a [Skills England](#) Bill were announced in the King's Speech. A [Children's Wellbeing Bill](#) aims to introduce a range of education policies that, if made into law, this could see a range of changes to schools and trusts including:

- Free breakfast clubs in every primary school
- Limiting the number of branded uniform items that a school can require
- Bring multi-academy trusts into the inspection system

A [child poverty taskforce](#) will consider factors related to household incomes, employment, housing, children's health, childcare and education to create a new child poverty strategy. Liz Kendall (Work and Pensions Secretary) and Bridget Phillipson (Education Secretary) will front the taskforce.

A [curriculum and assessment review](#) has been launched. The review will look closely at the key challenges to attainment for young people, and the barriers which hold children back from the opportunities and life chances they deserve – in particular those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged, or with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). The review will publish recommendations in 2025. Following the review, all state schools – including academies who currently do not have to follow the national curriculum – will be required by law to teach the national curriculum up to age 16.

Latest Research and Resources

The impact of the cost-of-living crisis on schools

Primary teachers report that the share of pupils coming into schools hungry, without adequate clothing or equipment for lessons continues to increase compared to last year according to a new report by the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER) on the impact of the cost-of-living crisis in schools

Pupil mental health also remains a significant concern for schools, with cost-of-living pressures on families being a likely contributor to mental health needs among pupils.

What happens to bright 5-year-olds from poor backgrounds?

[A new paper by academics at University London \(UCL\)](#) has drawn upon Millenium Cohort Study data from the UK to provide new evidence on this issue.

The study finds that the cognitive skills of bright 5-year-olds from low-income families keep pace with those of children from high-income families through to the end of primary school. However, the transition into secondary is a critical period, with high-achieving children from low-income backgrounds experiencing a particularly sharp relative decline in their attitudes towards school, behaviour, mental health and academic achievement between age 11 and 14.

Researchers attribute the decline to factors such as increased contact with the police, lower self-esteem, and negative attitudes toward education after the early years in secondary school among those from low-income backgrounds.

Education Policy Institute's (EPI) annual report

[The Education Policy Institute's \(EPI\) annual report](#) compares student attainment in examinations sat in 2023 to when examinations took place before the Covid-19

pandemic, in 2019. The report analyses attainment gaps based on economic disadvantage, gender, ethnicity, English as an additional language (EAL), Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and geography.

Most notably, the report found that the disadvantage gaps for 11 and 16 year olds are at their widest levels in over a decade, and remain much higher than pre-pandemic levels for children aged 5. Alongside the growth in the disadvantage gap for 5 year olds, there were also concerning trends for 5 years olds with SEND, who are now further behind other children than at any point in their report series.

The insights from the report can support governors and trustees to make informed decisions around strategic planning and resource allocation, analysis of data and monitoring progress, in order to hold school leaders to account.

**Thank you for all that you do in support of Catholic education within the
Diocese of Brentwood.**

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.