



BRENTWOOD DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE

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

Chairs’ news Spring term 1 - January 2025

Dear Chair

Blessings for the new term and a new year. I hope that over the festive period you were able to enjoy some well-deserved rest, relaxation and fun. As we come to the start of another busy year, I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of Bishop Alan, Father Stephen and Robert Simpson to thank you all for your significant contribution to the success of our Catholic schools. 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

Ofsted framework pilot volunteer schools

Ofsted will be consulting on their new framework early in the new year. As part of this process, they will be seeking to test the framework through pilot school inspections. The CES have raised with Ofsted the importance of including some Catholic schools in the piloting process, and they have asked us to invite schools to volunteer to be included.

Any piloting of the framework would not occur until after the consultation has concluded (which would be in mid-April 2025 if the timescales remain as currently planned). Any involvement in the pilot would not replace an inspection and would have no ‘real world’ consequences; it would simply be testing out the new framework, on Ofsted’s behalf, before publication. Those are all the details we have, and all we are going to get before the consultation launches. If any schools are interested nonetheless, please let us know by January 10th 2025 so we can put the names forward.

The Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill

You will have seen reports in the news about the new Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill. The DfE has issued some useful information about the contents of the bill on its Education Hub, and you can find that information by following the link below:

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2024/12/17/the-childrens-wellbeing-bill-what-parents-need-to-know/>

The CES will provide further guidance to dioceses as the provisions of the bill are worked through, but in the meantime, the DfE want us to reassure school leaders that no immediate action is necessary and there will be time for schools to prepare for any changes that are required, particularly in relation to teacher pay and conditions.

The government published its Children’s Wellbeing and Schools bill on the 17 December 24. Given the government’s parliamentary majority, it is very likely to become law in 2025,

making it the first significant piece of education law in England for ten years. [NGA views on the Bill](#)

Prior to the publication of the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill on 17 December 2024, the DfE had already updated its guidance entitled '[Schools Causing Concern](#)' guidance as part of its wider strategy around school improvement and academisation.

The guidance, now entitled '[Support and Intervention in Schools](#)', confirms the Government's approach to tackling educational underperformance, financial mismanagement and failures of governance in schools.

Among other things, it addresses:

- The circumstances in which a maintained school is deemed to be 'causing concern' or 'eligible for intervention';
- The various powers of the local authority and the Secretary of State (acting through the DfE's 'Region's Groups' (RGs) in respect to maintained schools;
- Intervention for underperforming academies; and
- More broadly, the role of the RG and the relevant local authority.

Tablet Article - Future of Catholic Education

"The rise of multi-academy trusts has been the most significant – and controversial – development in Catholic education in recent years. How can the grouping together of academies under a single leadership help create schools where pupils are inspired by Gospel values?"

An abridged version of Raymond Friel's recent lecture on the future of Catholic Education features in The Tablet. You can find it at [Catholic schools – stronger together - The Tablet](#)

[Biggest academy trust merger as diocese eyes new mega MATs](#) A diocese will move all its 236 schools into five mega multi-academy trusts (MATs) after bishops decided that “larger is better”.

Letter for schools and MATs regarding academy conversion support grants and TCaF

Please see letter below from CES.

“You are likely to be aware of the recent announcement by the Department for Education regarding the discontinuing of future academy conversion support grants and TCaF. The CES is very aware of how disappointed dioceses, schools and academy companies will be on hearing the news about the ending of these funding streams. These grants have played an important role in supporting the system to develop, enabling the growth of strong networks of Catholic academies which have played a huge part in improving standards and outcomes for children in our schools. The Catholic sector has made significant progress in academising during recent years in accordance with the will of the Bishops, and the CES shares your disappointment. Please be assured that we will continue to make representations to officials and ministers about the need for continuing support, and the very real detrimental impact of the removal of these grants. Paul Barber Director Catholic Education Service”.

Articles on Collaborative Working for Human Flourishing - from CES, CofE and Confederation of School Trusts

[Flourishing Together 2024](#)

[Called to Flourish in Faith and Hope 2024](#)

A group representing 1,400 private schools will press ahead with plans for a legal challenge against [the government's introduction of VAT from January](#)

In a board meeting on Thursday, the Independent Schools Council (ISC), the body which includes most independent schools in the UK, voted to pave the way for legal action.

Lord David Pannick KC, one of the country's leading barristers in cases relating to government decisions, is to lead the challenge which will be brought on behalf of parents, including those with children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The Budget announced an additional **£2.3 billion for mainstream schools and young people with high needs in 2025 to 2026**. This means that core school funding will total almost £63.9 billion next financial year. The DfE have published an [NFF policy note](#) to support the sector with their planning ahead of the final NFF allocations.

[Judges at the Supreme Court are to consider how women are defined in law in a landmark case brought by Scottish campaigners.](#)

It is the culmination of a long-running legal dispute which started with a relatively niche piece of legislation at the Scottish Parliament, but which could have big UK-wide implications.

It will set out exactly how the law is meant to treat trans people, and what it really means to go through the gender recognition process.

At the most basic level, it will address what "sex" actually means in law.

Is it about biology and chromosomes set at birth, or does it tie in ideas of gender identity and the gender recognition process?

And it could have implications for the running of single-sex spaces and services, and how measures aimed at tackling discrimination will operate in future.

The Redeemed - Third Advent video: [What a real man looks like](#)

It invites young people, particularly **teenage boys**, to think differently about what it means to be a man. The culture might say one thing, but we want them to know that true masculinity looks like **serving your family, humility, not thinking of yourself and what you can get from others, especially women**. We want them to know that what a man should really look like...is **Saint Joseph**

DFE

Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive publication

On Monday 18 November 2024, the DfE published 'Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive', the new Children's Social Care policy statement. The party claims this is the biggest overhaul in a generation to children's social care.

This new statement summarises the government's vision for a decade of reform and a legislative agenda to reset the children's social care system. It covers how national government will collaborate with local government and take a whole system approach. You can read the [policy statement](#) in full and the press release summarising the announcement.

Schools should end exam “tunnel vision” and increase the focus on wellbeing, according to Bridget Phillipson. Schools need to foster a sense of belonging to combat the attendance crisis and help turn pupils into happy and healthy adults [[The Guardian](#)].

DfE filtering and monitoring standards

Schools and colleges have a statutory responsibility to keep children and young people safe online as well as offline. Governing bodies and proprietors should make sure their school has appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place, as detailed in the statutory guidance, [Keeping children safe in education](#).

Filtering is preventative. It refers to solutions that protect users from accessing illegal, inappropriate and potentially harmful content online. It does this by identifying and blocking specific web links and web content in the form of text, images, audio and video.

Monitoring is reactive. It refers to solutions that monitor what users are doing on devices and, in some cases, records this activity. Monitoring can be manual, for example, teachers viewing screens as they walk around a classroom. Technical monitoring solutions rely on software applied to a device that views a user’s activity. Reports or alerts are generated based on illegal, inappropriate, or potentially harmful activities, including bullying. Monitoring solutions do not block users from seeing or doing anything.

[Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges - Filtering and monitoring standards](#)

MATS AND ACADEMIES

Local-tier MAT governors are unclear about their role and responsibilities, a new report from the Confederation of School Trusts (CST) finds. It highlights that communication is often poor between governance tiers in MATs, and local governors are left confused about their role [[Tes Magazine - subscription required](#)].

The [good practice guide for managing academy trust reserves](#) was updated by the DfE on 23 October 2024. This guidance recognises the update to the 2024 Academy Trust Handbook Section 2.8, stating trust reserve policies must include a clear plan for managing reserves. Governors should ensure their relevant policies are updated/approved accordingly.

A report published by IMP Software **suggests [A third of MATs anticipate their reserves dropping below the required level](#)**

Next Gen Governance discussion paper Confederation of Schools Trusts. Aimed at academy trusts, but useful prompts for maintained boards too.

- Does your long-term strategic planning extend beyond the working lifespan of your senior leaders and trustees?
- How does your trust attract candidates? Are you purposefully reaching diverse audiences? Does this include alumni, which in many trusts is a huge untapped resource?
- How independent is your governance appointment process or is recruitment ‘in my image’?
- Consider how the culture, climate and working conditions of your board might fail to

attract

(or actively drive away) more diverse staff and leaders.

- How do you ensure that diversity is embedded and not tokenistic in nature?

[Next-gen governance](#)

OPERATION ENCOMPASS

On 24 May 2024 Royal Assent was granted to The Victims and Prisoners Act. The new Act placed [Operation Encompass](#) into Law and puts a statutory obligation on police forces to share Operation Encompass notifications with schools.

In the House of Lords Earl Howe stated: *“By enshrining the scheme in law, we can ensure that it is consistently applied across all forces. This will help improve early intervention and enable the most vulnerable children to be safeguarded from the harms of domestic abuse.”*

ESFA Updates - The ESFA's latest update dated **18 December 2024** is [HERE](#) and below are the links to specific areas.

OECD REPORT

[GCSE maths pass bar “unachievably high” for some pupils, with foundation course suggested as alternative to maths resit](#)

NGA

[Child Poverty behind the statistics](#)

SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS AND SUSPENSION

[Primary school pupil suspensions in England double in a decade - BBC News](#)

The rate at which primary school pupils are being suspended from state schools in England has more than doubled in a decade, BBC analysis suggests.

Permanent exclusion rates of primary-age pupils have also gone up - by almost 70% in the same period.

Campaigners say children excluded from school at a young age experience long-term impacts

Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

New duty to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace

From 26 October 2024 all employers will be required to proactively prevent [sexual harassment in the workplace.](#)

The Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 (the new Act) comes into force on 26 October 2024, and introduces a new duty for employers ie schools and trusts to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of employees in the course of their employment.

PLEASE NOTE

[FOUNDATION GOVERNORS – SPECIFIC CRITERIA](#)

In respect of the school or college for which a person is or is to be a foundation governor, he or she **must not at any time** be:

- related to any member of the school or college staff, teaching or non-teaching;

- related to any governor whether **elected, appointed** or **ex-officio**, of the school;
- employed (whether as a teacher or otherwise) at the school.

A person (other than the parish priest) will not be re-appointed as a foundation governor of a particular school or college if he or she has just completed **three terms of office on that particular governing body**.

Governor Development

Upcoming Training and Events - for all training and events see website <https://www.dioceseofbrentwood.net/departments/education/events/>

Booking via links on website.

Role of Trustees in a Catholic MAT – 11th February 2025 (17:30-19:00)

This webinar 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

Booking: [To book your place](#)

NEW DATE: CSI for Governors – 13th February 2025 (17:30-19:00)

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 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

Booking: [To book your place](#)

New Date: Effective Safeguarding in Practice Training, training for Governors and Directors - Monday 24th February 25 (17:00 to 19:00)

Schools have a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils.

Are all your governors up-to-date with their statutory responsibilities around safeguarding? The statutory guidance *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (KCSIE) places an obligation on all governors and trustees to receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training at induction and to ensure that their training is regularly updated.

This popular workshop will run as a webinar and cover all the essential information you need to understand your statutory responsibilities.

It is so important that all governors are aware of their responsibilities for child protection and safeguarding. This is especially relevant for new governors as part of their induction and governors with a lead for monitoring safeguarding in their school.

Facilitator: *Kathy Dee, HeadStart and 5-19 Children's Health Service Manager, London Borough of Newham*

Booking: <http://w.pfrms.co/1ojc5c9sr>

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 – Spring 1 - Using DfE Good Estate Management for Schools (GEMS) for Governance – 22nd January 2025 (16:00-17:30)

This training 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.

Facilitator: David Gatheral, Diocesan Buildings Development Officer

Booking: [To book your place](#)

REPEAT WEBINAR: School Building Premises Training – Spring 2 – Schools Governance Responsibilities in Managing Asbestos – 11th March 2025 (16:00-17:30)

This training 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.

Facilitator: David Gatheral, Diocesan Buildings Development Officer

Booking: [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 - Module 1: The Distinctive Nature of Catholic Schools – 3rd June 2025 (17:00-18:30)

This module explores the distinctive ethos of church schools and the role of governance within a Catholic setting.

Booking: [To book your place](#)

Module 2: An Introduction to the Roles and Responsibilities of Governors – 20 January 25 and 1st July 2025 (17:00-18:30)

This module will help governors gain confidence and knowledge of the 3 core functions of governance and share good practice.

Booking: [To book your place](#)

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.

Conflicts of Interest

Please note the criteria for becoming a foundation governor.

<https://www.dioceseofbrentwood.net/departments/education/school-governance-2/foundation-governor-2/>

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 showing and you need support in filling a foundation governor vacancy, please get in touch. [Current list of Foundation Governor vacancies - October 2024](#)

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.

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.