



BRENTWOOD DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE

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

Governor News – December 2024

Welcome to the monthly newsletter for governors. This is monthly summary to help governors keep up to date with key themes of national **education policy, the local Diocesan context, research and good practice.**

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](#)

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.

OFSTED

[Ofsted: Schools keeping top grade almost doubled last year](#)

The proportion of ‘outstanding’ schools that kept their grade almost doubled last year, new Ofsted data shows. [Management information](#) published by the watchdog shows 39 per cent of the 1,214 previously ‘outstanding’ schools inspected in 2023-24 kept their grade. This is up from 21 per cent of the 579 inspected in 2022-23.

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](#)].

MATS AND ACADEMIES

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](#)**

Scheme of Delegation for MAT’s (September ‘24)

Please note the new updated [Diocesan Scheme of Delegation for Multi-Academy Trusts](#), was updated following detailed discussion and consultation with MAT representatives and the guidance of the diocesan solicitors Winckworth Sherwood, in a process which worked to capture existing good practice.

OECD REPORT

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

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.



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

Participating in appropriate Catholic governor training is both an expectation and an entitlement for all Foundation Governors and Foundation Directors, regardless of length of service and experience. In order to ensure that this happens, the Brentwood Diocesan Education Service (BDES) has produced a number of training resources. These are delivered via app, online and face-to-face. The diocese expects that all Foundation Governors and Directors will complete at least one BDES Catholic module/training course a year, for every year of service - a reasonable level of engagement. Where re-appointment is subsequently requested, and relevant Catholic training has not been completed, this would be a barrier for re-appointment.

Upcoming Training and Events

For all training and events see our website:

<https://www.dioceseofbrentwood.net/departments/education/events/>

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.**

Module 1: The Distinctive Nature of Catholic Schools – 9th December 2024 (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 – 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.

Booking: [To book your place](#)

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](#)



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 - 24th February 2025 (17:00-19:00)

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: [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 – 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](#)

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

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.

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