



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

Chairs’ News – Spring 2 - March 2025

Dear Chair

Welcome back to the second half of the Spring Term. I hope you are feeling refreshed after the half term break. 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

Religious Education Directory Resources

TEN TEN- The Catholic Foundations Pathway

RE Deep Dive is a video series based on the new RE Directory, ‘To Know You More Clearly’ that provides teachers of RE in primary and secondary schools with key insights into Catholic beliefs and teachings. That makes it an ideal tool for Catholic Life formation that is suited to all staff.

The Catholic Foundations Pathway offers courses that chaplains and Catholic Life Leads can plan into their CPD provision and use for new staff onboarding:

- Foundations of the Catholic Faith
- Discover the Story of Salvation
- Understand the Sacraments

Please access [our website](#) to learn more.

CES SEND Survey

The CES has created a survey for headteachers and deputy headteachers to complete regarding SEND needs in their schools. The purpose of this survey is to gather valuable insights to inform our ongoing work with the Government on SEND.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CES-SEND-survey-2025>

The deadline for responses is Monday 31 March 2025. Please encourage your school leaders to complete the survey so that their voices are heard.

DFE News School Admission Requirements: Foreign Nationals

The CES have been asked by the DfE to circulate the information below.

‘Information schools: Foreign nationals’ rights: school admissions

The Department for Education continues to receive reports of a small number of schools refusing to admit foreign national children, including refugees and asylum seekers, or delaying admitting them whilst they seek immigration documentation.

This practice breaches admissions and equalities law.

Whilst they reside in the UK all children have a right to attend school, irrespective of their immigration status. We encourage you to review the guidance provided on [school applications for foreign national children and children resident outside England.](#)’

Whilst they are in England all parents are under a statutory duty (section 7 of the Education Act 1996) to ensure their children, if they are of compulsory school age, receive a suitable full-time education.

Their parents have a right to apply for a school, and school admission authorities are under a duty to comply with that preference unless ‘prejudice’ applies, as defined in section 86 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (SSFA), and to comply with the rules about processing applications and not seeking unnecessary personal information set out within the School Admissions Code.

Also, under section 86 of the SSFA, LAs are under a duty to provide advice to all parents in their area on their preferences.

We have published information [on our website](#) that:

‘Admission authorities for state-funded schools:

- must not refuse to admit a child on the basis of their nationality or immigration status nor remove them from the roll on this basis

- must not ask to see passports or other immigration information as a condition of admission (this would be a breach of paragraphs 1.9(a) and 2.8 of the [school admissions code](#))
- [with the exception of children who are Irish nationals](#), must not actively recruit foreign national children who are still resident overseas as pupils’

We continue to receive reports of some schools refusing to admit refugees and asylum seekers and some refusing to admit children until their parents provide immigration documentation. Separately, we have found, from time-to-time, a small number of others recruiting cohorts of students, living abroad, from the EEA to study in their sixth forms (which would, since Brexit, be in contravention of those students’ visa/visitor rights and could lead to immigration enforcement action against them).

It is unlikely that every school will seek advice from the CES website before responding to applications from foreign nationals and so we would appreciate it if you could ensure that your schools – and other admission officers - are aware of school admission authority duties in respect of applications relating to such children.”

DfE - First schools in England to offer free breakfast clubs announced. The government has confirmed the first 750 schools to offer the scheme, which will start in April and provide at least 30 minutes of free childcare before school [[GOV.UK](#)].

The scheme has not been rolled out to all schools as yet,

DFE - Academy Admissions Complaints

Findings from a review of complaints made to the Department for Education about how independent appeal [panels managed academies admissions appeals in the academic year 2024 to 2025](#).

The review provides advice on what steps clerks, panels and academy admission authorities can take to ensure admission appeal hearings comply with the [school admission appeals code](#).

OFSTED NEWS

- [Improving the way Ofsted inspects education](#) - See accompanying [press release](#) and [video](#) by His Majesty’s Chief Inspector (HMCI), Sir Martyn Oliver. **This consultation closes at 11:59pm on 28 April 2025.** Earlier this month, we launched a [consultation](#) to ask parents, carers, professionals and learners what they think about our proposals to improve education inspections and our new report cards for providers.

- [Improving the way Ofsted inspects education: proposals explained for education professionals](#) - Video by Lee Owston, National Director, Education, explaining toolkits and report cards, introduced as part of our proposals to improve education inspections.
- [Education inspection framework: implementation review](#) - A summary of how Ofsted has implemented the education inspection framework (EIF) since it was introduced in 2019.
- [Ofsted's ethical research policy](#) - Updated in line with government social research guidelines.

Cyber Security for Schools.

The National Cyber Security Centre have a dedicated webpage for schools.

[Cyber Security for Schools - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)

This includes link to cyber security training and a downloadable power point presentation.

Copy of the presentation can be found in the ERCOGS Useful Resources folder on GovernorHub together with Cyber Security questions for governors/trustees.

[Cyber Security](#)

Link to the NCSC online training for school staff via You Tube is as follows:

<https://youtu.be/pP2VKWSagE0>

Absence - Almost a third of pupils refused to go to school in the past year, according to a new parent poll. The most common reasons cited were not enjoying school, mental health problems, having a special educational need or disability (SEND), and bullying [[Tes Magazine - subscription required](#)].

National offer day for secondary school places is approaching. Pupils due to start year 7 in September will find out about school places on Monday 3 March, with parents/carers having the right to appeal these decisions [[BBC News](#)].

Be clear on [how to handle appeals](#) and get details on how the full appeals process works.

Schools Complaints

[School complaints review calls as 80% of leaders abused](#) Over 80 per cent of school leaders have been abused by parents in the last year – with one in ten having been the victim of an assault, a new poll suggests, prompting calls to review complaints procedures.

Action needed on “[rising threat of violence](#)” in schools, says teachers’ union NASUWT. Schools need a national multi-agency forum to improve safety and security, a teaching union has urged the government.

Whistleblowing - The governing board's role

[The Governance Handbook 7.20](#) states that governing boards are responsible for agreeing and establishing a whistleblowing procedure that protects staff who disclose wrongdoing.

In practice, senior leaders in the school/trust are responsible for writing and implementing the procedure. In a multi academy trust (MAT), the procedure is likely to be trust-wide and approved and reviewed at trust board level. ([Academies Handbook 2.40](#))

In local authority (LA) maintained schools, the procedure should be based on the LA’s procedure.

Boards should ensure that all staff know:

- what protection is available to them if they make a disclosure
- what areas of malpractice or wrongdoing are covered in your whistleblowing procedure
- the different routes available for making a disclosure

[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.

Academies' Day and CMAT Development Conference

We are running the Diocese's CMAT Development Conference on Monday 7th July 2025 09:30-15:15, venue, at the Champion school, Wingletye Lane, Hornchurch, Essex, RM11 3BX

There is no charge for attending this conference and a light lunch will be provided. The invitation to attend is extended to all Headteachers and Chairs of Governors (or Vice Chair if they are unable to attend) of all schools in the Diocese – whether your school is a VA school, Single Academy, or part of a Catholic Multi Academy Trust (CMAT).

This is an important opportunity to hear about the successes and challenges from some current CMATs, their journey so far and their plans for the future. There will be an opportunity to share good practice and network with colleagues. For those schools not yet part of a CMAT it will be an opportunity to find out more about and consider ways in which to engage with the Bishop's vision for education in our diocese.

This is a significant opportunity for school leaders, and we ask you to prioritise it in your diary.

To book, click [here](#).

New Date tba: Effective Safeguarding in Practice Training, training for Governors and Directors

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 be arranged)

Webinars on Premises Related Issues

Webinars are being run for governors and trustees on premises related issues. Please see details below and note the date for your diaries:

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](#)

Chairs Forum 2025 – Tuesday 14 June 2025 – 4.30-6.00 pm

This important termly Chairs' Forum for chairs/vice chairs will cover key topics as well as advice on recent Diocesan and National educational developments.

This is an online webinar.

Facilitators: Rob Simpson, Director of Education and Maria Shepherd, Deputy Director

[To book your place, please click here](#)

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 – 1st July 2025 (17:00-18:30)

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

Booking: [To book your place](#)

Online Learning

Please find all Chairs and Governors Newsletters

<https://www.dioceseofbrentwood.net/departments/education/school-governance-2/governors-newsletters/>

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

PLEASE NOTE

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.