



Brentwood Diocesan Education Service

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

17th July 2020

Dear Colleague (Headteacher/Chair)

A big thank you to all of you! What a fantastic job you have been doing in the face of unprecedented circumstances, confusion and change. Having to deal with managing your schools during a pandemic with often changing or conflicting government guidance, evolving risk assessments, changing parental expectations and even union intervention. I am in awe of what you have been able to do and I thank you for the massive contribution you have made for the children, families and staff at each school but also for Catholic education in the Diocese of Brentwood. I can also assure you of continuing diocesan support through the BDES team and Link Advisers as well as our continued prayers and blessings.

We do not know what the new academic year will look like. There could still be significant restrictions or even local lockdowns in specific areas and so as a consequence the future will undoubtedly have to include a blended model of on-line training and support alongside face to face interaction when it again becomes possible. We have been working on a range of on-line training and resources, some of which will be available through the Gift-Ed App that we launched earlier during this academic year. Others are likely to be delivered via Zoom and Microsoft Teams. We are planning an admissions Webinar with our Diocesan solicitors using Click technology for September so that the sort of provision that we offer can continue to evolve and develop.

Formatio Executive Leadership Formation Programme 2021 – SAVE THE DATE

As Chair of the South East Hub I want to draw your attention to some proposed training provided by Formatio that we are supporting. This follows the success of the Formatio Executive Leadership Formation Programme 2019/20, developed by the Catholic Education Service in partnership with EducareM and the Catholic Independent Schools' Conference, we are now seeking *existing and aspiring executive leaders* to join our 2021 cohort.

The programme is aimed at those leading, or aspiring to lead, two or more Catholic schools and will focus on faith formation and professional development in the context of the evolving role of executive leadership.

The programme features two residential events in 2021 (Residential 1: 8th – 10th February 2021 and Residential 2: 5th-6th July 2021) with input from experienced executive headteachers, industry specialists and other stakeholders. Further details will be issued at the beginning of the Autumn Term 2020.

Enquiries and expressions of interest should be sent to Eileen Williams at the Catholic Education Service: ewilliams@catholiceducation.org.uk

In addition within the Diocese of Brentwood we will be looking to establish a new CAO Network for CMAT leaders. More information will follow about this in September.

DfE Funding for 2019/20 NPQs - Alert for schools

The DfE has made us aware of a complex situation concerning funding for NPQs through certain providers. When the Department funds courses, it requires all NPQ providers to register the details of all course participants, to enable the Department to check a participant's eligibility against the database of qualified teachers and to avoid the risk of double funding courses with the same participant enrolling on multiple courses. Most providers comply with this but there are some anomalies in the participant data – usually where names are spelt incorrectly or have changed from when the participant registered; this means that the Department is unable to verify the eligibility of some participants.

The DfE have been chasing the providers concerned since January this year and has set several deadline for them to correct the anomalous data, making it clear that **failure to correct this information would result in the course fee entitlement being withdrawn for those unverified participants** which means the providers would not be able to claim reimbursement for those fees from the DfE. **If funding is withdrawn, providers may invoice the participant's school for payment**, which is permitted within the DfE contract. The deadline for providers to correct outstanding anomalies for 2019/20 is 31 August 2020. As a result can I ask you to ensure that any NPQ participants who are asked to check and amend the accuracy of their details do so as a matter of urgency, and certainly before 31 August 2020.

Teaching Vacancies website

As we approach the end of this academic year I wanted to remind you of the Teaching Vacancies website <https://teaching-vacancies.service.gov.uk/>. As you may recall, Teaching Vacancies is a free job listing service developed by the DfE which aims to reduce the burden of recruitment costs on schools.

It is estimated that schools currently spend around £75m on recruitment advertising every year and it is hoped that with more publicity for Teaching Vacancies in the 2020/21 academic year this cost can be reduced. The CES have worked with the DfE earlier in the year to build a search function into the website that would enable applicants to search specifically for vacancies in Catholic schools. This could prove to be helpful as we move in to next year and the next recruitment period. The DfE have been approached and asked to provide us with details about the numbers of schools that are currently using the service. and we will provide this information to you when it becomes available. There is also a link to the site on the CES website <http://catholiceducation.org.uk/recruitment-process/item/1000048-vacancies-in-catholic-schools>.

Further enhancements have also recently been made to the service to enable vacancies to be listed more efficiently with the launch of an 'upload document' feature which provides employers with the ability to upload related documents to the job listing e.g. job descriptions, person specifications, application forms etc.

We have also been informed by the DfE that they will be raising awareness of Teaching Vacancies to all job seeking teachers, including NQTs and encouraging them to sign up to the 'job alert' function which will keep them updated with the latest teaching opportunities matching their criteria.

Finance

We have been working towards providing a financial overview for some time now with the Diocesan Finance Team. We fully accept that it is important that we share this information with schools so that we can be transparent about how money is used to support Catholic Education within the Diocese of Brentwood. In putting this overview together, we also wanted once again to share the context in which we are operating.

I have also provided a link below to an updated version of the Essential Functions document that we have previously shared with schools. This document provides a summary of the areas of support and provision that may only be provided by the Catholic diocese for its schools. The updated Essential Functions were refined as a result of discussions with DfE, ESFA and CES. We are able to be very clear about the range of things that we offer to schools, many of which you will now already be familiar with. We have a team in place that continues to work with schools across the diocese on a regular basis. We have provided you with information about these roles in a previous update. Information is also available on the Diocesan Website.

We continue to aim to provide high quality support over a range of areas for all schools - something which many of you have confirmed in feedback that we have received. We have worked to do this on the basis that our operation would not be aiming to make a profit from the levy and that we would always look to provide more and charge less whenever this was possible. With any venture, it takes time to see patterns of expenditure developing and we are very grateful for the level of additional financial support that comes from the Diocese of Brentwood in addition to the levy as this has certainly helped us to minimise the cost to schools.

We continue to deliver on the promise made that what we offer is not for profit and that if we ended up with a surplus that this would be returned to schools in the form of a reduction in the Levy or a rebate. **I am therefore able to confirm that the levy/school contribution will remain unchanged from September 2020. I am also very pleased to be able to confirm again, that having considered the accounts and financial situation that we will not now seek to collect the summer term 2020 levy payments from schools. It is however very important that any schools that have not as yet completed their payments for this year do so by 31st August at the latest.**

Going forward we will continue to refine the Levy to ensure that it remains not for profit but also so that the Essential Functions can continue to be delivered.

School Admissions: Certificate of Catholic Practice

I have only received one enquiry about the operation of the Certificate of Catholic Practice in the context of the extraordinary events of this year. In particular, there was a question whether admission authorities of schools where they use the Certificate of Catholic Practice should make a decision no longer to require the Certificates this year, whether they should

apply for in-year variations, and what instructions, if any, should be given to clergy administering the scheme.

At this stage, the CES has advised that there is no reason why the Certificate of Catholic Practice cannot be used by schools that require it (oversubscription) in accordance with the existing admission arrangements, and therefore no need for in-year variations of admission arrangements.

For ease of reference, the Bishops' Conference's Certificate of Catholic Practice, and associated guidance for clergy can be found on the CES website:

<https://catholiceducation.org.uk/guidance-for-schools/admissions>

The reasons for this advice are as follows:

1. Applications for secondary transfer (together with the Certificate of Catholic Practice, where required) do not need to be submitted until the 31 October 2020 (for secondary transfer) and 15 January 2021 (for applications to primary school). It is currently too early to predict whether or not churches will be closed in the Autumn term. We appreciate that, in a normal year, some clergy will make arrangements to issue Certificates well in advance, perhaps even before the Summer holidays. However, this year is not a normal year, and, while tighter than usual, there may well still be a couple of months to put in place mechanisms to identify those seeking a Certificate and to issue them during the Autumn Term. It is therefore too early at this stage to decide there is insufficient time to implement the scheme in something like the normal way.

2. The Bishops' Conference Certificate of Catholic Practice is firmly based on the Church's own discipline relating to Mass attendance. For that reason, question of Mass attendance should not, in principle, be affected by the temporary cessation of the obligation under canon 1247: see the Guidance for Clergy under the heading 'Length of Practice'.

3. Schools are legally obliged to apply the admissions criteria for entry in 2021 which they set within the statutory time limits some time ago. At this stage these can only be varied by each school applying to the OSA, separately, for an in-year variation to their admission criteria. At this stage we would advise against any such applications.

4. We believe that the current Guidance to Clergy on issuing Certificates already contains a reasonable amount of flexibility to allow clergy to exercise proper pastoral judgment in each case, taking into account all of the circumstances. The extraordinary situation we all find ourselves in this year will form part of the circumstances of each case. Ultimately, the priest is being asked to do no more than certify whether or not the child comes from a practising Catholic family to the best of his knowledge and belief, in all the circumstances.

5. Before the Bishops' Conference adopted the Certificate of Catholic Practice, it, and all associated guidance, were subject to detailed consultation with the Office of the Schools Adjudicator. We therefore have a high degree of confidence that schools adopting it and using it as envisaged will not be subject to a successful challenge.

If at any time it looks likely that churches will be closed during the Autumn term, then we will revisit this guidance. As churches are now opening, we do not currently envisage that there

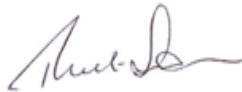
will be a problem with the use of the Certificate of Catholic Practice and I hope that this provides clarity on this subject for schools.

This guidance relates to schools that have adopted the Bishops' Conference Certificate of Catholic Practice, and the CES Model admission arrangements as previously requested by the Diocese of Brentwood.

Finally, I wish you well and I hope that you have an opportunity to unwind, relax and find some peace and quiet over the summer. I am a member of ASCL and I came across some words in a recent newsletter from Geoff Barton where he quoted Gilbert and Sullivan and I thought they were quite appropriate. Given all the pressure that school leaders have been under in recent months it is now time for a period of calmness and time to re-charge the batteries so that we can return after the summer break ready to rise to the challenges that will almost certainly come our way:

*"In a contemplative fashion,
And a tranquil frame of mind,
Free from every kind of passion,
Some solution let us find.
Let us grasp the situation,
Solve the complicated plot —
Quiet, calm deliberation
Disentangles every knot."*

Best wishes and have a great summer.



Robert Simpson
Director of Education