



BRENTWOOD DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE

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

September 2020

Dear chair

Welcome back to the new 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 will find it a useful summary.

These are extraordinary times for schools and governors and on behalf of Bishop Alan, Father Stephen and Rob Simpson may I give a big ‘thank you’ to all of you for the incredible way in which you have adapted to the challenge.

The key focus now is the safe return of pupils to schools and getting schools back on track and it is vitally important to be thinking strategically about how to provide support for a robust and effective return to fulltime learning by pupils. DfE have published [guidance for actions for schools from the start of the autumn term](#).

The significant impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the learning of children and young people, and the challenges schools face in reopening to all pupils, is highlighted in a [new report by the National Foundation for Educational Research \(NFER\)](#).

[This checklist and questions to consider looks at some of the items for governing bodies to focus on as the new term unfolds](#)

Diocese of Brentwood News

Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct sets out clear expectations of the role and behaviour required from school governors and trustees in order for the governing board to properly carry out its work. All governors are expected to sign the Code of Conduct on an annual basis and uphold the [Seven Principles of Public Life](#) (the Nolan principles).

If you have not already done so, the Diocese recommends that you adopt/adapt the [Catholic Education Service Code of Conduct](#) (they have 3 versions for different types of school). The Code of Conduct should be reviewed and agreed at the first full governing body meeting of the autumn term each year, but **please remember that new governors should sign the Code of Conduct when they are appointed**.

There have been several cases where carelessness with social media, especially with Facebook, has been an issue with governors, so I recommend including this wording as a bullet point in the section on *roles and responsibilities*:

- We will always use social networking sites responsibly and ensure that neither our personal/professional reputation, nor the school's reputation or that of the Diocese of Brentwood is compromised by inappropriate postings

Updated Capability Policies

The [updated capability policies are now available to download from the CES website](#) in fully amendable word format – please note that CES do not expect schools to make substantial changes to the policies without discussing with the Diocese first. There are separate versions for maintained schools and academies

School Admissions: Certificate of Catholic Practice

A number of enquiries are still being received about the operation of the Certificate of Catholic Practice in the context of the extraordinary events of this year. In particular, there have been questions whether admission authorities of schools where they use the Certificate of Catholic Practice should make a unilateral 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.

The CES advises that there is no reason why the Certificate of Catholic Practice cannot be used by schools that require it in accordance with the existing admission arrangements, and therefore no need for in-year variations of admission arrangements. A key reason it does not need to change is because the practice is in relation to the previous 5 years and not just the past few months.

For ease of reference, here is the link to the [Bishops' Conference's Certificate of Catholic Practice, and associated guidance for clergy](#)

Governor Recruitment

Since we are currently unable to hold a face-to-face governor recruitment event, we are advertising vacancies online for foundation governors. We are also working with the local parishes, *Inspiring Governance* and *Governors for Schools* to look for suitable governors for our schools.

We have asked clerks to advise us of [foundation governor vacancies](#) but if your school is not shown and you need support in filling a foundation governor vacancy please [get in touch](#).

Governor Development

As you know, in light of the ongoing government requirements for social distancing we made the difficult decision to postpone our face-to-face workshops until at least January 2021.

We are busy rescheduling some of our face-to-face training for 2021, in the hope that it will be able to go ahead. However since any gatherings in the conference room are currently capped at 10 people, and there could still be significant restrictions or local lockdowns in specific areas, we have also been working on a range of online training and resources, some of which will be available through the Gift-Ed App launched earlier this year.

I appreciate that the benefits of face-to-face training are hard to replicate but hope that our new forms of delivery will enable governors to continue to develop and update their knowledge and skills.

Online learning through Gift-ED

Setting objectives for the headteacher and assessing their performance and professional development needs are an essential part of driving school improvement. Many schools and academies will be setting objectives for the headteacher this term and as we continue to develop resources for our online learning platform Gift-ED, I am pleased to confirm that a new course on **Headteacher Appraisal** is now available to help governors and trustees carry out the process effectively

This covers key steps of the process, as well as advice on appointing the headteacher's performance management panel, external advisers, setting objectives and pay recommendations. You can [preview a demo version here](#)

This course is suitable for all members of the headteacher appraisal panel and you should ensure that at least one member of the panel completes the course.

Governors who already have an access code for *Faithful Governance* will now be able to view the course as part of the Gift-ED library. If you do not already have an access code, please advise Sophie of the governors you are nominating for your school [by using this link](#)

Faithful Governance

It is so important that governors keep up to date with the latest legislation and good practice and reflect on their responsibilities as a governor in a Catholic school, so I am delighted that governors in 35 schools now have access to the online App we have developed in collaboration with Anspear.

If you have not already done so, please advise Sophie of the first 5 foundation governors you are nominating for your school [by using this link](#) so we can send them the access code to start their learning. You can [preview a demo version here](#)

Our first webinar!

The next Chairs' Network meeting will focus on Admissions and be led by our Diocesan solicitors as a **webinar** on Tuesday 29 September 2020 18:00-19:30. You can [book your place here](#)

The session will include:

- who is responsible for determining the admissions arrangements in the case of VA schools, SATs and MATs?
- how to carry out a consultation
- oversubscription criteria for Catholic schools
- the requirement for admissions arrangements to be fair, clear, objective and easy for parents to understand how places will be allocated
- sixth forms
- appeals

Diocesan Conference for Governors –now rescheduled

I am delighted to confirm that we have rescheduled [the Governors' Conference and it is now available for booking](#). (**Friday 2 July 2021** 9:30-16:00 at de Rougemont Manor, Warley). This full day conference will provide a valuable exciting opportunity to network and learn with other governors and trustees across the Diocese.

The conference will include a mix of speakers and workshops as well as a buffet lunch, with Rosemary Lovatt NLG and NLG Advocate for East of England and NE London leading an afternoon interactive session for all governors on support and challenge: holding school leaders to account. We have been keen to keep the cost as low as possible so there is a very competitive charge of £50 per governor.

Academy News

Congratulations to the following schools who recently became an academy in a Diocesan Catholic Multi Academy Trust:

The Rosary Catholic Trust

Holy Family Catholic Primary School, Witham (September 2020)

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Harwich (September 2020)

Our Lady of Grace Catholic Trust

St Antony's Catholic Primary School, Forest Gate (September 2020)

New Academies Financial Handbook

The 2020 edition of the Academies Financial Handbook came into effect on 1 September 2020. Changes to the 2020 edition are summarised at the beginning of the handbook.

Safeguarding Update

NEW Keeping Children Safe in Education for September 2020

The latest version of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) has been published so it is very important to ensure that your safeguarding and child protection policy, and other related policies, are updated. In some cases, you will need to create new procedures, for example, what to do if there are allegations about supply teachers. The new guidance also includes an explicit inclusion of mental health.

Governing bodies and Trust Boards should ensure that all staff in their school read at least Part one of this guidance.

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Spot Checks for Schools

HSE have advised schools that they will be conducting spot checks on schools from Monday 7 September. The spot checks will take the form of an initial phone call to review the measures taken for reopening to minimise spread of the virus causing COVID-19. Where the initial call raises concerns about a school's approach, it will be referred for a further intervention which may include a visit to the school.

It is essential that all governing bodies and trust boards see the new risk assessment in place for their school for September, keep it under review and ask the question **'how do you know it's working?'**

Governing Body Meetings

As the autumn term unfolds, and schools get back on track, governors will need to consider how best to facilitate any governor visits to school.

It is likely that governing body meetings will continue remotely through video or teleconferencing this term and you may also agree to carry out link role visits and the

headteacher appraisal this way. If you are using video conferencing platforms to continue to meet as a governing body, then you must consider the security of the platforms that you are using. Please also remember that all parties will need to agree to these arrangements – you may find this [model protocol for virtual meetings](#) useful.

You may wish to consider a blend of onsite and remote meetings since some physical presence of governors whilst the school is in action will be important to enable governors to carry out their role effectively. However you agree to work it is key that the governing body maintains contact with school leaders, that robust risk assessments are carried out, and that you are able to adapt the way you work if the situation changes.

Child Protection Disclosures

Research and anecdotal evidence suggests an increase in child abuse by parents and carers and an increase in criminal gang activity, including 'County Lines'. Adolescents were four times more likely to be targets of physical abuse than under-11s. Online sexual offences against children were up during lockdown as was the number of indecent images uploaded by children themselves.

This means that it is likely that more children and young people will want to share their experience with trusted adults in school so it is important that there is the capacity to deal with this and any referrals that follow.

Ofsted News

[Ofsted plan a phased return to inspection](#), starting with [an interim period of visits during the autumn term](#), with resumption of full inspections expected from January 2021.

These visits will include schools of different types and of all Ofsted grades. Typically involving 2 inspectors for 1 day, they will want to have collaborative conversations with school leaders about any barriers that the school is facing in managing the return to opening fully, how pupils are getting back into expected routines and their behaviour, and the school's safeguarding arrangements. Inspectors will also talk to school leaders about how remote learning fits into their wider curriculum plans.

Visits will be based around constructive discussions with the school; they are not inspections, so will not result in a grade. However, after a visit the inspector will write a short letter, which will be published on their reports website.

DfE News

Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE)

Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) was statutory from 1 September 2020. However, because of the impact of COVID-19 on planning and preparation, [DfE have written to schools](#) to give more flexibility to discharging this duty effectively.

Terms of office for parent and staff governors

DfE have confirmed that for maintained schools, [the legislation does not allow for an extension to the terms of office for parent and staff governors during the COVID-19 outbreak](#) (see question 8). Any such governor who has been temporarily extended should abstain from voting until "properly" elected. For those governors who are due for election in coming weeks - either be appointed as an Associate Member until an election takes place, or the school runs an election process and ensures that everyone can take part.

Changes to the school exclusion process during COVID-19

This [statutory guidance describes the temporary changes to the school exclusion process due to coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#). The normal arrangements and procedures that must follow a decision to exclude on disciplinary grounds are described in the 2017 statutory guidance '[Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England](#)'. They are unchanged except as noted in this guidance.

For exclusions occurring between 25 September 2020 and 24 March 2021 (inclusive of those dates), meetings of governing boards or independent review panels should be held via remote access if:

- it is not reasonably practicable to meet in person due to coronavirus (COVID-19)
- the other [conditions for a remote access meeting](#) are met

The deadline for applications for an independent review in relation to exclusions occurring between 25 September 2020 and 24 March 2021 will be 25 school days from the date on which notice in writing of the governing board's decision is given to parents, or directly to the pupil if they are 18 or above.

Teaching Vacancies Service

The [Teaching Vacancies website](#), launched by the Government in 2019, is a free job listing service which aims to reduce the burden of recruitment costs on schools.

The CES have worked with the DfE to build a search function which enables applicants to search for jobs specifically in the Catholic sector; this search function for the *Teaching Vacancies* service has now been built in to the website and can be accessed via this [link](#).

It is important to note that you search by inputting "Catholic" into the "Keyword" search bar, rather than there being an advanced search option with titled options. This will then bring up any teaching roles within the specified geographical area of a Catholic school.

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 such as job descriptions, person specifications and application forms to the job listing.

Latest Research

Pupil Engagement in Remote Learning

A report by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) [Pupil Engagement in Remote Learning](#) has found that most teachers believe their pupils were doing much less work than they would expect at this time of year, with pupil engagement lowest in schools with the highest levels of deprivation. Limited access to technology remains a significant challenge

Covid-19 and the Mental Health of Young People in the BAME Community

A data insight report from young people's mental health & wellbeing platform, Kooth, found that the [mental health concerns of their BAME users have seen a greater increase than those of their white peers](#).

Apprenticeships and Social Mobility: Fulfilling Potential

The Social Mobility Commission warns that the apprenticeship system is failing disadvantaged young people in England with the Covid-19 pandemic making things worse by exacerbating youth unemployment.

Their report, [Apprenticeships and social mobility: Fulfilling potential](#) highlights a 36% decline in people from disadvantaged backgrounds starting apprenticeships, compared with 23% for other groups.

It also highlights:

- only 13% of degree-level apprenticeships (the most expensive apprenticeship option) go to disadvantaged apprentices
- only 63% of disadvantaged males successfully complete apprenticeships, compared with 67% of the more privileged
- on average, apprentices from disadvantaged backgrounds earn less than those from non-disadvantaged backgrounds.

The commission's report also says that most of the benefits of apprenticeships are going to those from wealthier backgrounds, but it stresses that apprenticeships are "one of the most effective means of boosting social mobility for workers from poorer backgrounds - if they can get into and through the system".

COVID-19 and Social Mobility

The Sutton Trust's report on the [impact of COVID-19 on early years](#) highlights the impact of lockdown on child development, especially for more vulnerable children.

Children in Lockdown

A report by The Childhood Trust [Children in Lockdown - the consequences of the coronavirus crisis for children living in poverty](#) finds that victims of child abuse and child sexual exploitation were particularly at risk under lockdown. A related concern is the rise in total alcohol sales and the potential adverse effects on children and young people living in households with increased drinking patterns.

Mental health concerns, wellbeing, hunger and food insecurity, and homelessness are also addressed in the report.

Thank you for all that you do for your school. I would like to reassure you that the BDES team will continue to be available to support you by phone, email, on-line and in person where the government guidance permits.

With best wishes and prayers

Debbi Botham
Diocesan Governance Development Officer