



## **BRENTWOOD DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE**

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

January 2021

Dear chair

Welcome back to a new term and a new year. I hope that over the Christmas period you were able to recharge your batteries a little and relax.

2020 was such a challenging year and on behalf of Bishop Alan, Father Stephen and Rob Simpson may I express our gratitude for your strategic lead in guiding our schools through this time.

The start of 2021 is no less challenging. As you know, we are now under national lockdown restrictions with all of our schools moving to remote learning for anyone other than vulnerable children or the children of key workers until at least mid-February 2021. The situation continues to evolve but 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.

### **Diocese of Brentwood News**

#### *Staff Wellbeing*

The constant changes and strains which schools have had to face cannot be underestimated and will have impacted upon the wellbeing of everyone working in the school. Is staff wellbeing a regular agenda item at your full governing body meeting? The Diocese of Brentwood has a [model policy on staff wellbeing](#) you can use or adapt and there are some [useful mental health resources for schools on the CES website](#).

[Education Support Partnership has a free helpline for staff](#) which includes 24/7 telephone support.

#### *Jargon Buster*

Are you confused by constantly changing education jargon? You can [access our updated jargon buster here](#)

#### *Updated Grievance Policies*

[Updated grievance policies are now available to download](#) from the CES website in fully amendable word format. You can view [an outline of the changes](#) in this document. 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

### *Communication with Schools when we receive a complaint*

From time to time we do get complaints at the Diocese about an individual school. This does not happen very often. When it does happen sometimes the person complaining is very up front and open in what they write, on other occasions they are more circumspect. We always share with schools any complaints we are aware of that are clear and from a named person.

Sometimes however we do get anonymous complaints and we have had to look at these carefully and make some sort of assessment about whether it is appropriate for the complaint to be passed on or followed up with the school. It is not always possible for us to determine if a complaint is legitimate or if it is simply a vexatious complainant writing to everybody and anybody. For example, receiving a complaint from an unnamed person about the cancellation of Irish dance lessons that the headteacher has already talked about with a Link Adviser would clearly be a low priority as far as the Diocese is concerned.

By comparison, if we were alerted to an anonymous complaint (which could be viewed as whistleblowing) that referred to inappropriate behaviour or relationships of Senior Catholic leaders, financial mismanagement, or safeguarding concerns then as a Diocese we believe we have a duty to refer them to the appropriate authorities. This means we share them with the headteacher and chair of governors as a matter of course. If concerns relate specifically to the headteacher then they are shared with the chair of governors in the first instance, as this will be the relevant pathway in most school complaints procedures. This is the policy we adopted some time ago and I felt it important to remind you about this.

### *Church Marketplace - Four opportunities to access funding to improve your school's energy efficiency and reduce carbon footprint*

Their supplier **LSI Energy** is waiting to support our schools to access the funding and answer any queries they may have about:

1. Funding for Energy Audits / Decarbonisation Advice The Low Carbon Skills Fund has been launched at the start of October 2020.
2. 100% Grant Funding for Energy Efficiency projects which include a heat pump or the like
3. SALIX Zero Interest Loan Funding for Schools and Public Sector Organisations
4. SEEF Zero Interest Loan Funding for Academy Schools

Schools can contact Matt Fulford directly to discuss [matt@inspireefficiency.co.uk](mailto:matt@inspireefficiency.co.uk)

### *Brentwood Diocese Section 48 Inspection Update*

In keeping with several other Dioceses, we have taken the decision that Section 48 Inspections will not resume in Brentwood Diocese until at least the beginning of the summer term, ie 12 April 2021.

At this time, it is not clear whether the resumption of denominational inspection in the summer term will be a requirement to inspect or a permission to inspect. This will depend very much on whether the DfE accept proposed regulatory changes that will allow Dioceses to catch up on their outstanding inspections and smooth out the lumpiness of the schedule without risking non-compliance. We will write to you again later in the Spring Term to confirm when exactly Section 48 inspections will recommence in Brentwood Diocese.

The new Catholic School Inspection Framework will be rolled out on a mandatory, national basis from September 2022, with trials taking place in the academic year 2021-22.

### *Looking after School Buildings*

Looking at ways in which to ensure that we have a strategic approach to our oversight of the school estate, the Diocese is working with an organisation called 1st Planner as we look to develop our vision in this area. We are also trying to ensure that we engage with schools around buildings so that we can administer the VASCA funding for Voluntary Aided Schools fairly and transparently.

What is VASCA funding?

- VASCA (Voluntary Aided School Condition Allocation) is grant funding for schools to undertake capital projects to improve their premises. It is the replacement capital funding programme for voluntary aided schools replacing LCVAP (Locally Controlled Voluntary Aided Funding). The main difference between the programmes is that LCVAP used to be administered by local authorities and VASCA is administered by the Diocese
- VASCA funding is heavily prioritised toward condition issues, that is replacing worn out building elements rather than sustainability issues which is provision for new facilities or remodelling existing. Sometimes sustainability issues can be addressed as part of a project to address condition issues
- The Diocese currently hold c £1.5m uncommitted VASCA funding and will receive an additional amount for 2020-22 which is to be confirmed.

Headteachers have been asked to submit applications for VASCA capital funding and the deadline for these VASCA applications is **20 January 2021**. Applications will be prioritised in accordance with criteria sent to headteachers but **please note that it is important that schools use professional property consultants to help write bids, tender the projects and manage them**. The consultants will be responsible for managing asbestos, CDM and providing operation and maintenance manuals and the health and safety file after practical completion. The consultant's fees will be met from VASCA if the project is approved.

We plan to run a series of workshops starting in the Spring of 2021 which will focus on "Looking after Your Buildings." A timetable for these events will be shared with you in due course.

### *School Admissions Timetable and Consultation*

It is that time when schools would normally be consulting on admissions. Consequently, I would like to remind you of the need to consult with the Diocese around any proposed changes to admissions policies. We have over the last 4 years stressed the need to ensure that all diocesan schools bring their admission criteria in to line with the latest guidance on admissions and to use the [CES model admissions arrangements](#) and the [CES model supplementary information form](#) when revising your School Admissions Policy.

Admission authorities must have determined their admission arrangements for entry in September 2022 **by 28 February 2021**. Please note that consultation should take place when either admission arrangements are changed or if a school or academy has not consulted within the past 7 years.

As set out in the [Schools Admission Code 2014](#), the timetable for consultation and determination of admission arrangements is that:

- Consultation must be for a minimum of 6 weeks and should take place between 1 October 2020 and 31 January 2021
- Admission arrangements must be determined by 28 February 2021
- A copy of determined admission arrangements must be sent to the local authority by 15 March 2021
- The deadline for objections to the Schools adjudicator is 15 May 2021

When consulting please send a copy to [sophierussell@dioceseofbrentwood.org](mailto:sophierussell@dioceseofbrentwood.org) confirming that you have used the CES model documentation to help to formulate your school admissions policy.

#### *Changes to CES application forms following DBS legislation changes*

The Government has recently introduced the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (Amendment) (England and Wales) Order 2020 (the "Order"). This Order makes amendments to the DBS filtering regime in the following two respects:

1. it has removed the requirement for the automatic disclosure of youth cautions, reprimands and warnings; and
2. it has removed the 'multiple conviction' rule. A rule which meant that all convictions were automatically disclosed where a person had more than one conviction, regardless of the nature of their offence or sentence.

The Order applies to DBS certificates issued from **28 November 2020** onwards. [Guidance has also been issued](#) The CES has updated its model application forms and 'Rehabilitation of Offenders Act – Disclosure Form' in light of these legislative changes. New model wording has been included as suggested in the government guidance cited above. [The updated versions of the model documents are now available on CES website.](#) Please inform your HR providers that revised application forms are available.

In response to feedback, the application forms are now available in fully amendable word format. This will enable schools to make changes to the forms but schools should only be making substantive changes if they have Diocesan consent.

#### *CES- Temporary Admission Appeals Regulations – UPDATE*

In April 2020 temporary regulations *The School Admissions (England) (Coronavirus) (Appeals Arrangements) (Amendment) Regulations 2020* and accompanying guidance were introduced giving admission authorities, local authorities and admission appeal panels more flexibility when dealing with appeals during the COVID-19 outbreak. These regulations permitted appeal hearings to be heard by telephone or video conference. It also allowed appeals to be decided on the basis of written submissions only. In addition, the statutory timescales were amended.

These regulations were temporary and are currently due to expire on 30 September 2021.

It is important to note that the temporary regulations and guidance only apply where it is not reasonably practicable to comply with the School Admission Appeals Code for a reason relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). Therefore, any extension will not mean the flexibility will be available for all admission authorities to use all the time. It will mean the temporary arrangements are available to use when they are needed. When they are not, the duty to comply with the The Schools Admission (Appeal Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 and the School Admission Appeals Code remains.

## **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 March 2021. The Diocese, however, remains committed to providing support and training to enable effective governing boards, particularly with the specific task of leading a Catholic school, and we have been busy developing a blended approach to governor development which includes webinars and online learning through Gift-ED to support you at this time:

### *Online learning through Gift-ED*

I am delighted to confirm that we have increased the number of Gift-ED licences to 10 per school. Governors in 58 schools are now accessing the APP as we continue to develop the courses available to governors. New courses for the spring term will include *Ofsted for Governors* and *Engaging with Parents* (release date later in the spring term) with several others in the development stage. Downloadable certificates and/or a 'digital badge' are available on completing a Gift-ED course.

If you would like to nominate governors to access the APP, please advise Sophie of the additional 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](#)

### **NEW** *Preparing for Ofsted*

Governors who already have an access code for *Faithful Governance* will soon be able to view this 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](#)

### *Webinars*

#### *Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) –statutory guidance for governors*

The new RSE curriculum became statutory from September 2020 and it is important that primary and secondary governors are aware of their responsibilities under the new statutory guidance. This webinar on **18 January 2021** (18:00-19:30) will provide a comprehensive overview of the responsibilities of governing bodies in this area and address the response of the Catholic Education Service to the Statutory Guidance in the form of the October 2019 update to the CES Model Primary and Secondary RSE Curriculum. To book your place [please use this form](#)

### **NEW** *Model Contracts of Employment and Workplace Policies Workshop*

This training falls into two parts and is useful for chairs and vice chairs as well as school leaders, HR leads and business managers.

*Part 1* – [a one hour Zoom session on Monday 25 January 2021 \(16:30-17:30\) presented by Kerri Goddard of the Catholic Education Service in partnership with the](#)

[Diocese of Brentwood](#). The session will provide delegates with an understanding of the work of the CES and the model employment documentation provided by the CES for use in all Catholic schools and academies. To [book your place please complete this form](#).

*Part 2-* [a one hour Zoom session on Wednesday 10 February 2021 \(16:30- 17:30\) which explores the practical application of model CES policies when appointing to reserved posts, the role of the Brentwood Diocesan Education Service in supporting schools through the appointment process for reserved posts](#) and our own recruitment documentation developed to support schools. To [book your place please use this form](#).

### ***NEW Governor monitoring during the COVID-19 pandemic***

DfE guidance does not prevent governors or trustees going into schools, following a robust risk assessment, but it is likely that much of the business of the governing body will still be conducted remotely for the foreseeable future. Suitable for all governors, this session will be run as a webinar on **9 February 2021** (18:00-19:30). It will look at some of the practical applications of governor monitoring for school improvement during these challenging times, including monitoring remotely, governor visits and use of performance data. To book your place [please complete this form](#).

### ***NEW Role of Trustees in a Catholic MAT***

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 on **27 April 2021** (17:00-18:30) will cover:

- Structure of MATs
- Role of Members
- Roles and Responsibilities of Trustees

The training will also provide an opportunity to look at sample trust board agendas; due diligence templates; and examples of Trust Vision documents. To book your place [please complete this form](#).

### **Safeguarding Update**

#### *Employment checks for EU/EEA teachers from 1 January 2021*

The government has announced that from 1 January 2021 professional regulators in the EEA (EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) will no longer share information about sanctions imposed on EEA teachers with the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA). Previously, teachers who had lived or worked outside of the UK but within the EEA would have their information on regulatory sanctions shared by the relevant country with the TRA.

As this information sharing process will no longer continue, employers will need to conduct checks to ensure that applicants are not subject to regulatory sanctions outside of the UK. In practice, this means conducting checks in relation to those who have lived or worked in the EEA in a similar manner to the current checks required for those who have lived or worked outside of the EEA.

For applicants that have lived or worked outside of the UK, schools must make any further checks they think appropriate so that relevant events that occurred outside the UK can be considered (often called overseas checks). They also need to obtain an enhanced DBS certificate with barred list information (even if the teacher has never been to the UK) and letter(s) of professional standing (as described below).



These checks should be conducted at the same time as the other pre-employment checks. Any offer of employment should be conditional on satisfying these checks in line with the advice contained in Keeping Children Safe in Education.

The employer (governing body or Academy Trust company) should request from the applicant proof of their past conduct as a teacher. This proof should be a letter of professional standing issued by the professional regulating authority in the country in which they worked. The letter should include information on any regulatory sanctions the applicant has been subject to (where applicable). For every country in which the applicant has worked or lived (outside of the UK) a separate letter of professional standing should be obtained. Such evidence can be considered, by the employer, alongside information obtained through other pre-appointment checks to help assess the suitability of the candidate.

The [announcement and relevant guidance is available here](#)

### **Ofsted News**

*Second briefing note on interim visits*

Ofsted has published their [second briefing note on interim visits](#) with key findings showing wide variability in pupils returning to school and the many challenges in keeping schools safe and open. School leaders said that their pupils were generally happy to be back, and had settled in well, but they were also clear about the changes they had seen in some pupils, including poorer physical and mental health.

*Phased Return to Full Inspection*

Ofsted have [published guidance and details of plans from January 2021 as part of a phased return to full inspection](#) From January 2021, they will resume monitoring inspections of schools judged as requires improvement or inadequate. They will also continue to carry out section 8 'no formal designation' (NFD) inspections if they have significant concerns about any school.

### **DfE News**

*Updated flexible working in schools guidance*

The [guidance has been updated](#) to reflect the new definition of flexible working and the process for requesting flexible working, including a clearer distinction between statutory and non-statutory requests. The guidance has also been updated in respect of the considerations for addressing potential challenges to implementing and requesting flexible working.

New and updated links are also provided to a range of resources which may assist those who are returning to work.

*COVID-19 workforce fund for schools*

The DfE has published [new guidance on the eligibility criteria and claims process for the COVID-19 workplace fund for schools](#). This fund is designed to support schools facing significant staff absences and financial pressures with the cost of staff during the 1 November to 31 December 2020 period.

*GCSE and A levels – summer 2021*

The situation has changed again and you will doubtless have picked up that the government has confirmed that GCSE and A-Level exams in England are being cancelled this year. Education Secretary Gavin Williamson is due to make a statement in the House of Commons on how they will ensure children are fairly assessed.

*DfE to consult on plans for post-qualification university admissions*

The Education Secretary has [announced plans to review the university admissions system with a potential move to post qualification admissions](#). The plan is to review a post-qualification university admissions (PQA) system, whereby students in England would receive university offers once they have obtained their final grades.

*Catch-up premium: COVID-19*

The Department for Education has published [new guidance on what catch-up funding schools are eligible for, when payments will be made and how the funding can be used to help pupils catch up on missed education](#). The catch-up premium is in addition to the funding for the national tutoring programme, 16 to 19 tuition fund, and oral language intervention programme for reception-aged children.

**Latest Research**

*Impact of Covid-19 on Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (Interpol)*

[A recently published report by Interpol](#) found shifts in environmental, social and economic factors have combined to create an increased risk of child sexual exploitation and abuse, both online and offline. These factors include:

- the closure of schools and subsequent movement to virtual learning environments
- the increased time children spend online for entertainment, social and educational purposes
- confinement measures leading to more time spent at home
- limited access to community support services, child care and educational personnel who often play a key role in detecting and reporting cases of child sexual exploitation

*In Their Own Words: The Digital Lives of Schoolchildren (Internet Matters)*

This [survey, the largest and most robust study of its kind, identifies key themes from what young people say about their online lives](#), though please note that the study ran before the pandemic.

Here are the key themes emerging from the report:

- content risk is more commonly experienced than contact risk
- parents could talk more to their children about online life in general, rather than only when giving advice
- the gap widens between vulnerable and non-vulnerable teens
- online aggression is racist, homophobic, often gendered, and hate speech is common
- spending quite a bit of money in games
- too few teenagers actively following the online safety advice they were taught
- the influence of vloggers with some age groups
- cyberbullying remains at 22% of the total sample
- meet ups are commonplace. 18% have done so and many are benign

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 in any way we can.

With best wishes and prayers

Debbi Botham  
Diocesan Governance Development Officer