



## BRENTWOOD DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE

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

February 2021

Dear chair

Welcome back to the second half of the Spring Term. With spring is just around the corner, a glimpse of sunshine and a plan for release from lockdown, things are looking much more positive, but challenges remain.

You will have seen that the [government has set out its 'roadmap' for the return to school from 8 March 2021](#), with secondary schools able to decide a phased return for different year groups during that first week. Attendance will be compulsory when schools go back, with penalty fines able to be imposed.

In secondary schools, there will be a requirement for face coverings indoors, including classrooms, where social distancing cannot be maintained. There will also be mass asymptomatic Covid-19 testing in secondary schools, with weekly voluntary testing at home, 'based on trust' after three tests in school. Primary and secondary school staff will continue to take 2 rapid COVID-19 tests each week at home.

Governing bodies should have oversight of their school's full reopening plans and risk assessments as well as staff wellbeing. This [model risk assessment and action plan](#) may be helpful.

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**

*Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)*

A reminder that the [new RSE curriculum was compulsory from September 2020](#); schools that were not ready or unable to meet the requirements by this date **must begin teaching by at least the start of the summer term 2021**.

Your RSE policy should be in line with [model CSE documentation](#):

A model Primary Catholic RSE Curriculum

A model Secondary Catholic RSE Curriculum

Good practice in developing a Catholic school RSE policy

A quality standard for Catholic RSE

A model RSE policy for Catholic schools

The [Diocese of Brentwood has a useful model RSE policy](#) that can be used as the basis of your own school's policy. You may also like to reflect on this [example of outstanding sex and relationship education in a Catholic context](#).

This [Governor Audit for monitoring RSE](#) and key questions will help governors monitor RSE provision in their school:

- Have all teachers in your school undertaken the [free recommended training](#)?
- What, if any, other training has been given to staff?
- Are staff confident about what they will be teaching?
- What resources are being used?
- What information has been provided to parents?
- Is your RSE Policy in line with model CES and Diocesan documentation?

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

Many of you attended the workshop presented by Kerri Goddard of the Catholic Education Service (CES), in partnership with the Diocese of Brentwood.

This well-received session provided 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. A follow up session on 10 February led by the BDES team explored the practical application of these policies within the Diocese of Brentwood.

The [CES model policies and procedures for schools and academies](#) in England are designed to ensure that the Bishops' objective - that Catholic schools and academies fulfil their responsibilities to preserve and develop the Catholic character of the school - is met throughout the employment relationship.

These CES model policies (not those of your HR provider) should be used as the basis of the employment and workplace policies in your school:

CES model contracts of employment  
CES Disciplinary Policy and Procedure  
CES Grievance Policy and Procedure  
CES Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure  
CES Appraisal Policy and Procedure for Teachers  
CES Appraisal Policy and Procedure for Support Staff  
CES Capability Policy and Procedure

**Please note** that when recruiting headteachers and deputy headteachers you must use [the BDES letter and form proforma when requesting a faith and character reference from clergy](#) allowing sufficient time for a response before shortlisting takes place.

Before starting the appointment process for a new headteacher, head of school or deputy headteacher, you must contact [Maria Shepherd, Deputy Director of Education](#) (primary schools) or [Cathy McKenna, Secondary Link Adviser](#) (secondary schools).

For those of you who missed it, we have arranged a further session on **Wednesday 24 February 2021 (16:30-17:30)** – see *Governor Development* below for details.

#### *Catholic School Inspection*

The New Catholic School Inspection Framework will be mandatory from **September 2022** but will be trialled from September 2021 in certain schools and Dioceses and from a later date in some places. The [Evaluation Schedule and Grade Descriptors](#) [have now been published](#). Training to look at this document in more detail will be scheduled in due course.

As you are aware, Section 48 inspections are currently suspended. **Denominational inspections in the Brentwood Diocese will not recommence until September 2021** in order to give schools time to 'recover'.

#### *Lockdown school closures – call for evidence*

The Public Accounts Committee in Parliament is scrutinising the lockdown measures to tackle COVID-19 and the impact these measures had on schools. This study will examine whether the DfE effectively supported schools and pupils in England during the past year. The CES intends to submit evidence to this inquiry which highlights the experience of the Catholic school sector. It would be helpful if you could provide your experience/ understanding in answering the following questions:

- Whether the DfE managed the overall response effectively;
- Whether the DfE managed the move to mainly home learning effectively; and
- Whether the DfE effectively supported vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

Due to Parliamentary timetables there is a short deadline for evidence submission so I would be grateful if you could send any comments to [tburke@catholiceducation.org.uk](mailto:tburke@catholiceducation.org.uk) before midday on Wednesday 3 March 2021, or get in touch to arrange a phone call with Tom Burke, CES Partnerships and Public Affairs Manager, to discuss your experiences (0207 901 1900).

#### **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**

##### *Webinars*

##### **NEW** *Induction – Being an Effective Governor in a Catholic School*

Especially suitable for new governors, this webinar complements the online training and will take place on **Monday 15 March 2021** (16:00-18:45). We will reflect on the distinctive nature of Catholic schools and discuss the 3 key roles of governors so governors can start to gain confidence and knowledge of how they can:

- Contribute effectively to strategic planning
- Participate in monitoring and evaluation
- Hold the school to account and be accountable

[Places can be booked here](#)

##### **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](#)

### ***NEW Finance, Budgets and Financial Monitoring Webinars***

We have arranged 2 webinars to provide governors with the knowledge to effectively lead strategic financial management within their schools. These webinars are suitable for all governors, but essential for those serving on a finance committee.

[To book webinar for maintained school governors](#): Tues 11 May 2021 17:30 -19:00

[To book webinar for governors in Academies/MATs](#): Wed 9 June 2021 17:30 -19:00

### ***Online learning through Gift-ED***

Governors who already have an access code for *Faithful Governance* will now be able to view **two new courses as part of the Gift-ED library**. Please see below for details. Downloadable certificates are available on completing a Gift-ED course.

Each school has been allocated up to 10 Gift-ED licences so if you would like to request access for further governors, please advise Sophie Russell of the governors you are nominating for your school [by using this link](#)

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

This new course outlines the key information governors need to develop their understanding of the Ofsted process so that they can effectively play their part in preparing for inspection and during inspection.

### ***NEW Engaging with Parents***

Parents are the primary educators of their children and it is important that Catholic schools collaborate and work closely in partnership with all parents and carers, including disadvantaged families and those families where English is not their first language. Some parents are 'harder to reach' and governing bodies will need to explore a variety of strategies for engagement. This course will give governing bodies an understanding of the importance of developing an effective strategic approach to parental engagement, including:

- keeping parents informed
- seeking the views of parents and carers to inform strategic decision making
- increasing parental involvement and becoming a 'parent-friendly' school.

### **Academy News**

A [new CMAT Newsletter](#) is being trialled to share information about MATs and academies across the Diocese of Brentwood.

### **Safeguarding Update**

#### ***KSCIE January 2021 Update***

An [update has been made to \*Keeping Children Safe in Education \(2020\)\*](#) to take account of changes to recruitment post EU Exit.

From 01 January 2021 the TRA Teacher Services system will no longer maintain a list of those teachers who have been sanctioned in EEA member states. Individuals who have lived or worked outside the UK must undergo the same Schools and

colleges must make any further checks they think appropriate so that any relevant events that occurred outside the UK can be considered.

These checks could include, where available:

- criminal records checks for overseas applicants - Home Office guidance can be found on GOV.UK; and for teaching positions
- obtaining a letter of professional standing from the professional regulating authority in the country in which the applicant has worked. Advice about which regulatory or professional body applicants should contact is available from the National Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom, UK NARIC.

Where available, such evidence can be considered together with information obtained through other pre-appointment checks to help assess their suitability.

Further information can be found in [DfE Guidance: Recruit teachers from overseas](#).

Please note that DfE has launched a [consultation on proposed revisions to KCSIE 2021](#) (to take effect from September 2021). The consultation closes on 4 March 2021.

#### *Working Together to Safeguard Children*

In December 2020, changes were made to the DfE statutory guidance [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#). Please ensure your policy is updated.

Key changes include:

- clarification about information sharing –strongly stating that ‘you (schools) do not need consent to share personal information...provided that there is a lawful basis to process any personal information required’
- updating the definition of safeguarding to specifically include mental health
- clarity about the Homelessness Duty, especially early assessments for 16/17 year olds
- strengthening the wording of domestic abuse by including coercive control

#### **Ofsted News**

Ofsted have confirmed that they will pause their inspections of schools for the week beginning 8 March, while schools are focused on reopening for all pupils. For the rest of term, they will continue to carry out their monitoring inspections, but will carry out on-site inspections if there are any immediate concerns – for example, about safeguarding or the leadership of a school. Remote monitoring inspections normally last for one day.

#### **DfE News**

##### *Admissions Appeal Arrangements during COVID-19 - Update*

Please note that on 31 January 2021 the [School Admissions \(England\) \(Coronavirus\) \(Appeals Arrangements\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2021](#) came into [force](#) meaning that the amendments to admissions appeals arrangements due to coronavirus will now continue to have effect until 30 September 2021.

In summary, they give admission authorities, local authorities and admission appeal panels more flexibility when dealing with appeals during the COVID-19 outbreak. The 2020 regulations permit appeal hearings to be heard by telephone or video conference. They also allow appeals to be decided on the basis of written submissions only. In addition, the statutory timescales have been amended



### *Remote Learning Offer*

The government asked all schools to publish information about their remote learning provision on their websites [by 25 January](#). This can be done in any format, aligned to the remote learning principles. Please make sure your school has done this.

To support school leaders in setting out that information on their websites, DfE have produced a [model template](#)

Further help and support on how to meet the expectations for remote education can be found in the [remote education good practice guidance](#)

### *Guidance for rapid asymptomatic COVID-19 testing for staff in primary schools*

DfE have published [guidance on the use of tests in primary schools](#). Schools do not have to produce a risk assessment for staff testing at home, as tests are not being done on the school site.

### *Staffing and Employment Advice for Schools (Jan 2021)*

DfE has withdrawn their statutory *Guidance on Managing Staff Employment in Schools*. Instead, governing bodies, academy trusts and school leaders should make use of this new non-statutory guidance [Staffing and Employment Advice for Schools \(Jan 2021\)](#) when carrying out staffing and employment duties

### *EYFS Profile Assessment*

The updated guidance on coronavirus disapplications states that completion of the EYFS profile assessment will not be mandatory in 2021 ([see section 6.2](#)).

This seems to suggest that there will be no requirement to submit data to local authorities and schools will not be subject to statutory external moderation. This change applies to schools who are early adopters of the EYFS reforms, as well as schools who are following the current statutory framework. The government will be requiring schools to use 'best endeavours' to complete the assessment in order to inform parents and Year 1 teachers of children's development.

### *Covid-19 and 'catch-up'*

Many pupils have missed out on months of face-to-face teaching, and the education secretary has said that ministers are looking at a range of actions to help pupils catch up on missed schooling. [Sir Kevan Collins has been appointed as education recovery commissioner](#) to lead a comprehensive programme of catch-up aimed at young people who have lost out on learning during the pandemic. However, [the idea that children must 'catch up' with learning lost due to the pandemic is heaping undue pressure on them](#), educational psychologists have warned, arguing that children's wellbeing rather than their learning should be the focus.

### *GCSE, AS and A level exams in summer 2021*

Following the [recent consultation](#), [DfE have confirmed that students who were due to sit exams this summer will receive grades determined by teachers](#), as late in the academic year as is practicable, with assessments covering what they were taught, and not what they missed.

Teachers will be able to choose a range of evidence, to underpin their assessments, including coursework, in-class tests set by the school, and the use of optional questions provided by exam boards and mock exams. Exam boards will be issuing grade descriptions to help teachers make sure their assessments are fair and consistent. A full and fair appeals system will be set out to provide a process to enable students to appeal their grades should they believe their grade is wrong grade given is wrong.

## **Latest Research**

### *Sutton Trust – Remote Learning: the Digital Divide*

While the government has embarked on a major programme of laptop distribution since the spring, [research from the Sutton Trust shows how steep the challenge remains, particularly for the most deprived pupils](#). Significant socio-economic gaps persist, and there are fears about the growing attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their classmates.

### *Mental Health Impact of the Pandemic*

The [2021 Prince's Trust Tesco Youth Index](#) indicates that more 16-25 year olds are feeling anxious than at any point in the last 12 years highlighting the "devastating toll" that covid-19 has had on their lives and their mental wellbeing. Amid the throes of a global pandemic, young people, particularly those not in education, training or employment are concerned about not being able to find a career as well as increased competition in the job market. However, young people are more determined than ever to strive for a brighter and more secure future with 78% hopeful for a better year ahead.

### *Too many at-risk children are still invisible to social care*

The impact of the pandemic since March 2020 has intensified issues such as family poverty, domestic violence, poor parental mental health and alcohol/substance abuse – all factors that put children at greater risk. However, at the same time there has been a significant fall in referrals to children's services, according to [research by the Office for the Children's Commissioner in England](#) risking even more at-risk children going undetected and not getting help.

### *Parental Stress, Depression and Anxiety*

**The latest report** from the Oxford University led COVID-19 Supporting Parents, Adolescents, and Children in Epidemics (Co-SPACE) study based on data from over 6000 UK parents, highlights the particular strains felt by parents during the lockdown. Parents of primary school aged children reported particularly high levels of stress during the first period of school closures last spring, with many juggling the demands of meeting their children's needs during the pandemic along with home schooling and work commitments.

Those with secondary school children worried more about the long-term impact of the pandemic, with 43 per cent feeling stressed about their children's education and future.

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