



BRENTWOOD DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE

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

November 2021

Dear chair

Welcome back to the second half of the autumn term.

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

Letter from Bishop Alan for Education Sunday 2021

In [his letter for Education Sunday 2021](#), Bishop Alan reflected on the impact of the pandemic and his firm belief that the best future for our schools is to work more closely together by joining Catholic Multi Academy Trusts (CMATs) to formally shape the Catholic education system in their locality:

‘In recent times some of our schools have had to face hostile approaches from those who do not share our vision for Catholic education. They would want to influence the direction of travel for their own purposes rather than necessarily for the benefit of the children and young people in our Catholic schools. Pope Francis writes that “Education is an enterprise that demands cooperation on the part of all involved – the family, the school and social, cultural and religious institutions.”² I feel strongly that the best way to achieve such cooperation which, in turn, furthers the vision and tradition of those pioneers, is for our schools to work more closely together by joining Catholic Multi Academy Trusts (CMATs).

Whilst this may be in line with thinking coming out of national Government it is also genuinely my firm belief that this is the best future for our schools. It is an opportunity for schools to work together actively and formally to shape the Catholic education system in their locality. It is this approach that will enable high standards of Catholic education to be maintained and where schools can contribute more widely as beacons of good practice in the local community. Indeed, where CMATs have been established in our diocese benefits have already been identified, including financial savings, greater inter-school support and renewal of the mission they share as Catholic schools’.

In light of the Bishop's letter, Fr Stephen has recently written to all Chairs about the further development of CMATs across the diocese. Please note that if your school is not yet in a CMAT you must ensure there is an agenda item, followed by a vote, at your next full governing body meeting about such a change.

If the vote is against joining a CMAT you will need to write to Fr Stephen to inform him of the vote and the reasons for your reservations. In subsequent years this item

is to be on the agenda for the first full governing body meeting of the year. This is to remain an expectation until the school joins a CMAT.

To support governing bodies of Catholic maintained schools as they start to explore joining a Catholic multi-academy trust (CMAT), we are running a webinar ***Joining a Catholic Multi-Academy Trust (CMAT) - Your Questions Answered*** on 29 November 2021 (17:00-18:30) [To book](#)

Notices of Potential Liability - COVID Vaccinations in Schools

It has come to our attention that Notices of Potential Liability have been issued to some school leaders by a group called Lawyers for Liberty. The letters advise the school leaders to take independent legal advice and consult their insurance providers. The letters allege that the schools are “positively promoting and encouraging the Covid vaccine for children aged 12 years and over, without a health & safety assessment or a full risk analysis, and possibly also without parental consent or parental consultation”.

At a stakeholder meeting with DfE, it was made very clear that schools are not responsible in any way for administering the vaccine, they will be responsible for forwarding communications from the NHS to parents and they will be responsible for allowing time during the school day for vaccinations to be given, but the process will be run by healthcare professionals. DfE also said that there was no need for schools to be concerned about liability.

Here is the [Bishops' statement in relation to vaccinations](#)

There is also [guidance from DfE](#). In the paragraph entitled “How vaccination in schools will work” you will see that there is a very clear statement that, “The School Age Immunisation Service will be the primary provider of the vaccination programme for healthy 12 to 15 year olds and will be legally responsible for the delivery of the vaccine”. There is also guidance about parental consent.

You will also see in this guidance that there is some advice about how schools should respond to misinformation campaigns. The primary advice here is not to engage directly unless it is necessary, and we would advise in this case that no response is provided.

Section 48 Inspections

As you are already aware, these will resume under our current framework from end of October/beginning of November 2021. Schools will be given 5 working days' notice of inspection; they will be one- day inspections (Primary), usually with 1 inspector (unless a Shadow is present). We will begin with those furthest back.

DFE will allow a maximum of 8 years for dioceses to ‘catch their inspections up’. It likely that we will have caught all schools up within a 7- year period and once you have been re-inspected, the 5 year limit comes back into effect. Any inspection taking place after September 2022 will be under the new CSI framework.

Dealing with Concerns and Complaints

It is in everyone's interest that complaints about your school are resolved at the earliest possible stage.


Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to invoke formal procedures. Schools should take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. The experience of the first contact

between the complainant and the school can be crucial in determining whether the complaint will escalate. To that end, schools and academies must have their own complaints policy in place and be clear about the procedures they will apply when they receive a complaint. DfE have some [useful best practice guidance on dealing with complaints and concerns](#)

Remember that complainants are entitled to a fair meeting or review. Anyone with prior knowledge or a conflict of interest should not take part in the complaints process, including proceedings of governing body meetings and committees

Virtual panel meetings are probably here to stay for the foreseeable future, but it is worth reflecting whether a face-to-face meeting may be a better format for resolving the complaint. If you have a virtual meeting, the clerk should provide support to the panel and ensure the panel, complainant and any witnesses all know how to access the meeting.

Many of you attended the recent webinar on Independent Panel Training by Winkworth Sherwood. Here are some practical tips from the webinar for running a complaints panel:

	<p>Practical tips for running a complaints panel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allow enough time for the meeting• Ensure you are fully prepared• Plan ahead – have an agenda ready for how the meeting will be conducted• Be prepared to scrutinise the school's investigation outcome letters – are the conclusions supported by the evidence?• Does the complainant need time to 'let it out?' – the power of listening• Even if the complaint is not upheld, are there any lessons to be learned? Can the outcome letter offer any acknowledgement about the issues raised by the complainant?• Take care with your outcome letter – allow time for panel members to read and reflect• Ensure that your clerk is fully aware of any relevant statutory procedures and those set out in your school policies
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Headteacher Appraisal

Many of you will be setting objectives for your headteacher this term and assessing their performance and professional development needs.

Effective oversight of the headteacher performance management process is one of the most important roles played by the governing body in the overall governance of the school and an essential part of driving school improvement.

The Diocese has written a practical online course for governors serving on the headteacher appraisal panel as part of the Gift-ED library. This provides governors appointed to undertake this crucial role with the key information needed to effectively play their part as a member of the headteacher appraisal panel. Governors who already have an access code for Faithful Governance will be able to

view the course. Each school has been allocated up to 5 Gift-ED licences so if you would like to request access to the Gift ED library for further governors, please advise Sophie Russell [by using this link](#)

Synod 2021-23

You may have seen the [Bishop's launch of the Synodal Journey](#).

The Synod Co-Leaders, Fr Andrew Headon and Teresa Carvalho, recently wrote to all headteachers asking for a 'contact person' and these have now received an invitation to an on-line introduction to the synod process, and how this prayerful listening exercise will be conducted in our diocese.

Since *'it is important for us to take stock of where we, the Church, find ourselves as we emerge from the pandemic and dream, together, of what Church we would like to be in the future'* they would like to extend the invitation to attend an online Introductory Training Session to as many people as possible, including governors. The session will outline the Synod Pathway for the Diocese of Brentwood, so please share this invitation with your governing body.

You can book your place by clicking on the link below for the date and time that suits you best (both sessions will be the same):

Schools: 5:00pm Monday 15 Nov: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/brentwood-synodal-process-introduction-training-session-for-schools-tickets-203467776597>

or

Schools: 5:00pm Wednesday 17 Nov: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/brentwood-synodal-process-introduction-training-session-for-schools-tickets-203470915987>

There is also a presence on the following social media platforms and the co-leaders would love it if you would connect with them on whichever platforms you use.

Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/DiocesefofBrentwood/>

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/brentwood_synod/

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/BrentwoodSynod>

In the meantime, if you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact synod@diocesefofbrentwood.org

Governor Development

Webinars

NEW - *The importance of Racial Justice for our schools*

[This conference](#) (via Zoom) on **Tuesday 23 November (9.30-15.30)** for school leaders chairs and vice chairs will provide delegates with significant insight in to the importance of anti-racism, equality, equity, and opportunity. School leaders will reflect and consider how they are able to take forward an anti-racist message in the schools that they lead and work in. Given the nature of this training it is strongly recommended that each school has two delegates in attendance.

To [book your places](#) Closing date for bookings: 15:00 on Thursday 18 November – subject to places still being available. The cost of this training session is subsidised by the diocese. Each school can have two delegates in attendance. The cost for the first delegate is £25 and the second delegate is free.

NEW Joining a Catholic Multi-Academy Trust (CMAT) - Your Questions Answered

This webinar on **Monday 29 November 2021** (17:00-18:30) is intended to support governing bodies of Catholic maintained schools as they start to explore joining a Catholic multi-academy trust (CMAT) and provide the opportunity to ask questions.

The training will cover:

- Current position of CMATs in the Diocese
- Structure of CMATs & role of members/trustees
- Potential advantages and challenges of joining a CMAT
- Next steps

[You can book your place here](#)

NEW Changes to Ofsted Framework (webinar for school governors)

This webinar on **Wednesday 1 December 2021** (17:30-19:30) will give governors an important overview of the new Ofsted framework, which comes into force on 1 September 2021, and the implications for governors and trustees. This includes key changes on responsibilities around safeguarding and tackling sexual harassment, abuse and violence among children and young people. [Book your place here](#)

Safeguarding Children (webinar for school governors)

The next *Safeguarding Children* workshop will run as a webinar on **Monday 17 January 2022** (17:30-19:00) and cover all the essential information needed to understand your statutory responsibilities. Suitable for all governors, but essential for those with a key responsibility for child protection and safeguarding, [you can book your place here](#)

NEW Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) webinar – governing body responsibilities

As you know, the new RSE curriculum became statutory from September 2020 and DfE has [updated its guidance](#) to make it clear that this is a statutory requirement.

It is very important that primary and secondary governors are aware of their responsibilities under the statutory guidance. A clear line of enquiry by Ofsted for governing bodies will be around the RSE curriculum and a carefully sequenced RSE curriculum will be important in meeting safeguarding responsibilities, including sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools.

The webinar will further 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, and highlight advice offered by current CES and diocesan documents such as model policies. This webinar will be taking place on **Wednesday 9 February 2022** (17:30-19:30) [Book your place here](#)

Online learning through Gift-ED

Governors who already have an access code for Faithful Governance will soon be able to view a new course **Appointing Headteachers and Deputy Headteachers** as part of the Gift-ED library. If you would like to request access to the Gift ED library of online courses for further governors, please advise Sophie Russell [by using this link](#)

Also to be released later in the autumn term:

- Appointing Heads of RE

Training for Clerks

Clerks' Conference (Essex Clerks' Association)

Disappointingly, because of low numbers due to Covid and pressures on schools the annual ECA Clerks' Conference has been [rescheduled for Thursday 12 May 2022 \(9:00 -13:00, JobServe Stadium, Colchester\)](#). Clerks can register their interest by emailing: bookings@essexclerks.org. Further details will follow in due course.

Governor Recruitment

Foundation governor vacancies are advertised through the Diocesan website. We also work with 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](#).

Safeguarding Update

Mental Health

[The Royal College of Psychiatrists has reported the number of children and young people being referred to mental health services for crisis and non-crisis care has increased significantly since the pandemic began](#). More children than ever are being treated by eating disorder services, with an unprecedented number are also waiting for treatment. There have also been significant increases in the rates of probable mental disorders in children and young people. In 2020, 16% of children aged 5 to 16 years were identified as having a probable mental disorder, compared with 11% in 2017.

The new Education Secretary has also called for better understanding of and support for pupil mental health issues, with wellbeing at the centre of everything we do in schools.

Is pupil wellbeing a regular agenda item in your school?

Ofsted News

Summary Evaluations of MATs

Ofsted have [published guidance designed to support inspectors in carrying out summary evaluations of MATs](#). It sets out the process and range of evidence gathering activities that inspectors undertake from the time the MAT is notified of the summary evaluation until the publication of the summary evaluation letter.

Ofsted inspections – assessing safeguarding

As you know, Ofsted [published their findings and recommendations of sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools, including online sexual abuse](#) in June 2021.

It is important to note that, as part of assessing safeguarding, inspectors will now consider how the school handles allegations and instances of sexual harassment, online sexual abuse and sexual violence.


This includes checking:

- that the school has appropriate school-wide policies in place that make it clear that sexual harassment, online sexual abuse and sexual violence (including sexualised language) is unacceptable, with appropriate sanctions in place
- that the school's policies are reflected in its curriculum (see the ['relationships, sex and health education' section](#)), which specifically addresses sexual harassment, online abuse, sexual violence and issues of consent
- that the school's staff have appropriate knowledge of part 5 the government's ['Keeping children safe in education' guidance](#)
- that all pupils are supported to report concerns about harmful sexual behaviour freely
- that concerns are taken seriously and dealt with swiftly and appropriately, and pupils are confident that this is case
- that comprehensive records of all allegations are kept

Inspectors will also look at how schools work to prevent sexual harassment, online sexual abuse and sexual violence through a whole-school approach that includes an effective behaviour policy, pastoral support and a carefully planned relationships, sex and health education curriculum.

They will expect schools to submit their sexual harassment and sexual violence data by 8:00 on the morning of inspection and inspectors will interrogate this data, or lack of it.

This [useful TES article summarises what schools can expect from Ofsted this term.](#)

	Is one of your governors attending the Changes to Ofsted Framework webinar for school governors on Wednesday 1 December 2021 (17:30-19:30)?
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DfE News

School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document 2021

Please note that the new version of the [School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document](#) (STPCD) is valid from 1 September 2021, with all changes applying retrospectively. Some teachers can receive payments to cover catch-up tutoring in response to the pandemic, and working days are reduced for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee bank holiday next year

Funded National Professional Qualifications (NPQs)

DfE has confirmed that additional money has been allocated to fully fund the reformed suite of National Professional Qualifications. This means that all programmes will now be fully funded and accessible to all teachers and leaders across the country. In addition, two further NPQs will be introduced from Autumn 2022 focused on leadership of Early Years and leadership of literacy. [Further information is available on DfE website.](#)

There are over 100 Catholic and CofE delivery partner schools across the country, and this is a real opportunity for teachers and leaders at every stage of their career to access development and progression pathways. **Please encourage your schools and MATs to maximise this and [enrol staff on these programmes](#)**

There are lots of practical ways that this funding could make a real difference to schools who most need it – for example:

- Secondary schools or larger primary schools – how could this funding mean that a group of staff could go on the programmes (across the suite) and then have a coherent leadership development journey together across each level?
- MATs – how might this full funding mean that MATs could fully embed this offer in their wider CPD approach, such that multiple people from across the MAT could engage in this learning together, and thus informing your MAT development journey as a group?

Staffing and Employment Advice for Schools

DfE has published [guidance for maintained schools and academies for managing staff and employment issues](#), replacing the statutory guidance from 2009 'Guidance on managing staff in schools'.

2022 key stage 1 and 2: assessment and reporting arrangements

Statutory guidance for [assessing and reporting the national curriculum at key stage 1](#) and [key stage 2](#) in the 2021 to 2022 academic year has been published.

What to expect in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

DfE has published a new guide for parents [What to Expect in the Early Years Foundation Stage](#) guiding parents through what to expect with their child's development.

School Admissions

DfE has confirmed that the School Admissions (England) (Coronavirus) (Appeals Arrangements) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2021 have received parliamentary approval. This means that the temporary appeals arrangements which provide flexibility when dealing with admission appeals during the pandemic will apply until 30 September 2022. The [updated DfE guidance](#) can be found here.

We have been asked by DfE to remind admission authorities that the temporary arrangements 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 COVID-19. Therefore, the extension does not mean the flexibility will be available for all admission authorities to use all the time. The temporary arrangements are available to use only when they are needed – when they are not, the duty to comply with The School Admission (Appeal Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 and the School Admissions Appeals Code remains.

[The Diocese has also updated its Admissions guidance](#), reminding all schools that they should use the [CES model Admissions Policies](#) and the [CES Model documentation in constructing their admission criteria for oversubscription](#).

New Education Secretary

You will have read that [Nadhim Zahawi](#) has replaced Gavin Williamson as Education Secretary following a Cabinet reshuffle. He has pledged to bring forward a schools white paper in the New Year outlining plans to tackle innumeracy and illiteracy and is considering the case for a longer school day (with an average school day of 6.5 hours)

He has [also vowed to tackle persistent pupil absences as a priority](#), 'getting to the root of what is causing children to be persistently absent and then tackling it head on'

since the children who lose out the most from not being in school are more likely to be disadvantaged children.

Latest Research

School Anxiety

Parent groups are warning of a rise in [school-anxiety cases leading to persistent and absence from education](#). There is no official data on absence due to school anxiety and many affected pupils are labelled truants but there are reports that support groups are being flooded with calls.

Further research into pupil mental health is calling for radical reform of mental health support in schools and more funding to support pupils after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Manifesto for environmental sustainability to be a key feature of schools' curriculum

The British Education Research Association (BERA) have launched a [manifesto](#) calling for teaching about the environment to become a central feature of school inspections, the curriculum and other accountability measures.

The plea to put climate change at the heart of schools' curriculums comes as the DfE is set to launch a consultation on its new Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy on 5 November 2021.

In response to *Laudato Si'* Bishop Alan has launched [a diocesan-wide initiative to 'inspire, refresh and rejuvenate our care for our common home'](#) inviting parishes, schools and individuals to play their part.

Understanding Progress in the 2020/21 Academic Year

The Education Policy Institute and Renaissance Learning have published their [latest assessment of the learning loss experienced by pupils as a result of the pandemic](#) revealing wide regional disparities.

Thank you for all that you do for your school.

With best wishes and prayers

Debbi Botham
Diocesan Governance Development Officer