



BRENTWOOD DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE

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

June 2023

Dear chair

Here we are in the second half of the summer term, with this academic year speeding by. I hope you managed to take a well-earned break during half term, coming back refreshed for what is always a busy period in the school 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.

Diocese of Brentwood News

Reminder: *commissioning of Foundation Governors by Bishop Alan*

Foundation Governors have a key role to play in helping the Diocese maintain and develop the Catholic character of our schools and ensuring that the school fulfils its proper, educational role in the life of the community.

As you know, this commissioning event on **Thursday 22 June 2022 (18:00 start)** at **The Most Holy Redeemer Catholic Church, Billericay** will recognise the contribution made by governors in support of Catholic education across the Diocese of Brentwood. This event is for new foundation governors and MAT Trustees as well as those who have been unable to attend a previous commissioning event. Other governors serving in our Catholic schools who would like to attend are also very welcome to attend this unique event.

Governors will be commissioned directly by Bishop Alan, who they represent on governing bodies of Catholic schools. They will also receive a certificate commemorating their commissioning. Following the event, they are warmly invited to join us in the hall for light refreshments.

[To book a place please complete this form](#)

Catholic School Inspection (CSI)

As you know, Catholic School Inspections in Brentwood Diocese commenced in January 2023. Under the new framework no inspections can take place in the first 2 weeks of September or the first week of January so inspections can commence from w/b 18th September 2023. Inspection notification is 2 working days (including the day of the call) and inspections take place over a 2 day period. Therefore telephone notifications will take place on Mondays or Tuesdays with inspections on Wednesdays-Thursdays or Thursdays-Fridays.

It is vital that schools have their Catholic School Self-Evaluation documents ready as these will need to be sent to the Lead Inspector after their initial telephone call.

In order to assist schools, it has been decided to give schools an indication of their 'inspection window'.

Schools in the Diocese of Brentwood which were last inspected under Section '48 from May 2017-June 2018 can expect to be inspected under CSI between September 2023 and July 2024. (Please note this may be subject to change if inspection administration circumstances outside of our control dictate).

Academy News

Trust Quality Descriptions

In the Schools White Paper DfE published the five pillars of quality for MATS:

- High quality and inclusive education
- School improvement
- Workforce
- Finance and operations
- Governance and leadership

They have now published a set of [draft descriptors for multi academy trusts](#) in each of these areas, defining the outcomes they wish trusts to achieve. Following consultation with the sector the descriptors are expected to be finalised this June, when more detailed commissioning guidance is also due to be published.

The descriptors for the board under the governance and leadership pillar include:

Culture - The board and executive leadership team anchor the trust's strategy in the needs of its schools, the communities they serve and the wider educational system in line with its charitable objects. The Accounting Officer, board and leadership team create a culture of ethical leadership, including the Seven Principles of Public Life.

Strategy – The Chair leads the board to set and champion a clear strategy for the trust, which aligns with the trust's charitable objects, covers all pillars of trust quality and, where applicable, sets out its aspirations for growth over time.

Executive leadership - Ensures high quality executive leadership through appointing its CEO and providing effective support and challenge to the CEO and executive leadership team.

Maintains sufficient independence from the executive leadership team to allow scrutiny of both their performance and organisational performance overall.

Sets clear objectives and effectively manages the CEO to ensure high performance.

Secures appropriate levels of remuneration for the CEO and executive leadership team.

Accountability - Holds executive leadership team to account for the effective implementation of the trust strategy and operating plan, including in relation to the use of resources and the drivers of impact.

Assures itself of the integrity of financial information.

Assures itself that there are robust risk controls and risk management systems.

Assures itself that there is compliance with regulatory, contractual, and statutory requirements, including safeguarding.

Non-executive leadership - Ensures a high performing governance structure where trustees and other non-executive leaders have the expertise to fulfil their functions effectively, with representation that reduces biases in decision-making. Accesses independent insight from internal and external audits, reviews of governance arrangements and other forms of expert advice. Provides board induction, training and review. Supports effective succession planning by building a pipeline of future trustees and committee members, with a focus on promoting diversity of thought and experience.

Engagement – oversees strategic relationships with external stakeholders.

Governor Development

Reminder of the importance of governor training

Please remember that participating in **appropriate Catholic governor training provided by the diocese** is an expectation of all governors regardless of length of service and experience. This means governors should be able to identify several Catholic training sessions or modules which they have completed and which the diocese are able to verify from attendance records or completion of Gift-ED modules. The easiest way of doing relevant training is simply by completing several modules on the GIFT-Ed App. We have flagged this up over many months (possibly years) and we are highlighting it again because we will be looking for evidence of training completed before approving the re-appointment of Foundation Governors from September 2023.

Online Learning

Gift-ED

Informative and easy to follow, the library of online courses are designed to support governors in our Catholic schools in their role and can be completed using multiple devices in short bite-sized chunks.

Please note that the training via the Gift-ED App will be free until 31 August 2023 after which there will be a charge. The charge is likely to be £160 plus VAT for a primary school for a group of governors and £320 plus VAT for a secondary school for a similar grouping. The diocese has funded this training for 4 years and written the materials so we believe there has been plenty of time for any current governor to have accessed good quality training materials for free.

When governors are appointed they are sent a link and invited to engage with this training. As it stands there is still time to sign up and access this free training. If you have done three Catholic Governor Training sessions or modules over a year you will be in a secure position and will have benefitted from the training you have participated in.

If you wish to find out more about the free GIFT-Ed training please contact either debbbotham@brcdt.org or victoriabarnes@brcdt.org

These are the modules available:

- Faithful Governance (for new and re-appointed governors/directors)
- Engaging with parents
- Preparing for Ofsted
- Curriculum for governors
- Appointing the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher
- Appointing Heads of RE

- Headteacher Appraisal (for members of the headteacher appraisal panel)

Webinars

NEW DATES: *Induction - Being an Effective Governor in a Catholic School*

As well as in-school induction, it is important that new governors attend Induction training to gain confidence and knowledge of their role within a Catholic setting.

Diocesan Induction training consists of two modules and the expectation is that governors attend both to complete their induction training:

Module 1: The Distinctive Nature of Catholic Schools – Monday 12 June 2023 (17:00-18:30)

This module explores the distinctive ethos of church schools and the role of governance within a Catholic setting. To [book a place](#)

Module 2: An Introduction to the Roles and Responsibilities of Governors – Monday 3 July 2023 (17:00-18:30)

This module will help governors gain confidence and knowledge of the 3 core functions of governance and share good practice. [To book a place](#)

NEW: Religious Education Directory (RED) Training for Governors

The RED is the new [Religious Education Directory \(RED\)](#) from the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, with which Catholic schools must be in full compliance by September 2025. It covers Religious Education as delivered in primary schools and in secondary schools up to and including Key Stage 3.

This new webinar on **27 June 2023** (17:00-18:30) about the directory will enable effective and informed monitoring of Religious Education in coming years. We will be looking at the requirements and the structure of the directory, at content and pedagogy, and at implementation and timelines. Our aim is to give governors an informed and strategic understanding of the Directory.

Facilitators: Maria Shepherd, Deputy Director of Education and John Adams, Secondary RE Adviser

[To book your place please complete this form](#)

NEW DATE: *Joining a Catholic MAT (CMAT) – Your Questions Answered*

In his [letter for Education Sunday 2021](#), Bishop Alan reflected on 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. This webinar on **Tuesday 19 September 2023** (17:30-19:00) is a short course 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

Facilitator: Stephen Adamson, Diocesan MAT Development Officer

[Book your place](#)

NEW DATE: *Safeguarding Children (webinar for school governors)*

The next *Safeguarding Children* update will run as a webinar on **Monday 2 October 2023** (17:30-19:00) and cover all the essential information needed to understand your statutory responsibilities. It is so important that all governors are aware of their responsibilities for child protection and safeguarding - especially new governors as part of their induction and governors with a lead for monitoring safeguarding in your school. To [book a place](#) please use this form.

Governor Recruitment

Our schools need you!

As you know, being a governor in a Catholic school is rewarding and an important role responsible for the raising and maintaining of high educational standards whilst ensuring the Catholic faith is at the heart of all you do.



Have you considered using your skills and experience to support another local Catholic school?

If you are interested and have capacity to become a governor in another school please get in touch debbibotham@brcdt.org

Vacancies

Foundation governor vacancies are advertised through the Diocesan website. As you may know, we have recently run a foundation governor recruitment campaign through the local parishes and we also work with *Governors for Schools* and *Inspiring Governance* to identify suitable governors for our schools.

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

Schools looking to recruit governors may also be interested in [our flyer](#) to distribute to parents and the local Catholic community. Get in touch if you would like a word version so you can adapt the flyer for your school.

Safeguarding Update

School and College Security Guidance

Recently there have been a number of incidents in the proximity to schools that have led to them being put into lockdown. In one, a rampaging bull was killed outside a school in Cheshire, and in another, six people were badly injured by two dogs 'dangerously' out-of-control in the West Midlands. A third situation followed a police alert of a 'suspicious vehicle' in North Yorkshire.

Does your school have effective lockdown procedures to keep children safe inside the school?

Whilst it is important to know what to do in these rare incidents, often this will mean ensuring staff know what to do, without unduly alarming pupils, especially younger children.

[Non-statutory guidance for schools can be found here](#)

Vaping Rise amongst 11-17 year olds

The latest surveys of 2,656 youngsters by YouGov in March and [Action on Smoking and Health \(Ash\)](#) in April shows a worrying rise in experimental vaping among 11 to 17-year-olds from 7.7% last year to 11.6% this year, with companies clearly marketing these products at children using colours, flavours and cheap disposable options.

Asked what they used, disposable vapes seem to be the e-cigarette of choice among youngsters, while purchases of vapes are mostly made from corner shops, with some outlets selling vape products to children as young as 12. [The government is taking steps to crack down on rogue firms targeting children with free samples](#) and have announced a review into banning the vaping industry selling 'nicotine-free' vapes to under 18s.

Last year the Welsh Senedd published a report on the effects of vaping in children and teens. [To read their report](#)

Ofsted News

Research report: How multi-academy trusts are involved in school inspections

Ofsted have published a [report exploring the role and responsibilities of multi-academy trusts in school inspections](#) and how they evaluate their work in their inspections of schools.

Summary of findings:

- Conversations with trusts are an integral part of a school's inspection: every school inspection of an academy includes discussions with trust leaders on the leadership and governance of the school. All trust leaders saw their role as supporting the headteacher and senior leaders during an inspection
- However, the fact that Ofsted's legal powers require inspection to operate at school level can leave the role of the trust in inspection unclear, causing frustration for trust leaders and inspectors
- Trust leaders and inspectors highlighted that inspection at school level does not hold the trust sufficiently accountable or attribute enough credit to the trust's work

- Inspections showed the wide-ranging leadership role of trusts that reflected the diversity of aims, structures and responsibilities in the trust sector. Trust leaders said that they were always involved in strategic school leadership decisions, regardless of their operating model
- Inspections cover the influential role that trusts have in the quality of education in their schools. The trusts we spoke to were always involved in designing the curriculum. Trust leaders worked with school leaders to develop a curriculum that worked for the school, regardless of their operating model
- Inspectors recognised the role of many trusts in setting expectations for teaching, and in reinforcing and managing behaviour. Trust leaders emphasised the benefits of being able to use experts employed by the trust to manage behaviour throughout trust schools
- Trusts often set the strategic vision for personal development and use trust resources to provide opportunities for pupils. Trust leaders emphasised the role of the trust in the community
- In 2019, Ofsted research in 41 trusts found that some trusts had very little involvement in overseeing the quality of education. This new research found that trusts were increasingly working across their schools to develop their curriculum.

Inspection looks at governance within a school. As part of their evaluations, inspectors highlight the trust board's role in setting the strategic direction of the school. Additionally, inspectors evaluate how the trust holds school leaders to account for the performance of the school and the oversight of school finances. Inspectors explore how the trustees challenge and support school leaders and how well they know the quality of education in the school, and check that statutory duties are being met. For example, inspectors in the survey reviewed the training and development provided to new and existing governors and trustees. Inspectors always evaluate how well those responsible for governance perform their statutory duties, such as safeguarding, during school inspection. All trust leaders spoken to were well informed of their statutory duties and were able to explain how they ensure that safeguarding is effective throughout their schools. This was true even when the trust had delegated its responsibilities to local school governing bodies.

DfE News

School Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions

DfE has updated their [statutory guidance on the suspension and permanent exclusion of pupils from maintained schools and academies](#) which **comes into force on 1 September 2023**.

The guidance has been updated to reflect the government's ambition 'to create high standards of behaviour in schools so that children and young people are protected from disruption and are in a calm, safe, and supportive environment that brings out the best in every pupil'. In addition, specific changes to the legislation governing the disciplinary school suspension and permanent exclusion process have been made and so changes have been made to the guidance to reflect this.

A summary of the changes can be found on pages 8 and 9. This includes:

- guidance for governing bodies (page 37) to ensure that they review data to consider the level of pupil moves and the characteristics of pupils who have been permanently excluded to ensure the sanction is only used when necessary as a last resort

- further guidance on the practice of involving pupils so that any excluded pupil is enabled and encouraged to participate at all stages of the suspension or permanent exclusion process, considering their age and ability to understand.

Review of RSHE

DfE has [announced the formation of an independent advisory panel who will provide expert advice on what is appropriate to be taught in RSHE and at what age](#). They will consider evidence provided by Ofsted on what is happening on the ground in schools to ascertain where clear age ratings are needed.

This is the first review of the statutory guidance since it came into force in 2020. It will provide an opportunity to consider whether the guidance covers the right topics and offers teachers clarity on how to teach sensitive subjects and engage parents positively. It will also make sure priority issues are given the attention they deserve, including considering new or additional content on mental health, suicide prevention, vaping and tackling violence against women and girls.

The review will be completed by the end of the year, following a consultation in the autumn. Input from the independent panel and wider stakeholders over the summer will inform the consultation.

PIRLS 2021- National Report for England

The [report outlines the results of the 2021 progress in international reading literacy study \(PIRLS\) in England](#) which assesses and compares the reading attainment and attitudes of pupils in their fourth year of formal schooling across participating countries.

England has risen to fourth out of 43 countries in the international reading league tables. Rising from joint eighth in 2016, England achieved an average score of 558, down one point from when the tests were last carried out in 2016, indicating a greater resilience to the impact of the pandemic.

The results follow the Education Policy Institute's (EPI) report stating that outcomes for reading in England "appear to have recovered for most year groups".

National Funding formula

[DfE has published their response to the consultation on the implementing the National Funding Formula \(NFF\)](#).

2023-24 will be the first year of transition to the direct NFF with the end point being a system which aims to ensure full fairness and consistency in funding, with every mainstream school in England funded through a single national formula. This consultation included proposals on reforms of two elements of funding, which will be implemented in advance of the full introduction of the direct NFF – split sites and growth and falling rolls funding. This consultation response confirms that changes to both factors will go ahead for 2024-25. Among the changes being introduced, and in recognition of falling pupil numbers across some areas of the country, is the removal of a requirement for schools to be Ofsted rated good or outstanding in order to be eligible for additional funding to help manage a significant decline in pupil numbers. Schools will need to show that places will be required within the next three to five years.

For schools with split sites the Government plans to allocate split sites funding nationally on the basis of a formula factor made up of a 'basic eligibility' element and a 'distance eligibility' element from 2024-25. This will replace the current local authority led approach. This national formula is intended to allow the Department to ensure funding is allocated consistently and fairly across the country, and that all split site schools receive funding towards the additional costs they face from operating across multiple, separate sites. Introducing this new approach for split sites funding is an important part of developing the NFF in advance of the final transition to the direct NFF.

The 'basic eligibility' for split site funding are:

- To be separated from the school's main site by a public road or railway
- To be used primarily for the education of 5 to 16-year-olds
- To share a unique reference number (URN)
- To have a building on a site that is maintained by the school.

Playing fields are excluded from the split sites funding. The DfE has published a list of eligible schools.

The 'distance eligibility' is confirmed as 500 metres by road between a school's main and additional site, in line with the distance threshold used by the majority of local authorities. The DfE acknowledge that a hard "cut off" would disadvantage schools who are just below the threshold, so they will include a distance taper as part of the formula, starting at 100 metres. Further details will be published in July, in line with the usual timetable.

32.5 hour school week from September 2023

Now that the summer term is well underway, this is a reminder for governing boards to discuss the length of the school day with leaders in their school or trust.

You will recall that the aspiration for all maintained schools in the [white paper last year](#) was for all schools to be open for 32.5 hours a week. However, DfE has not yet published the guidance which was due in 'summer 2022'. Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, and Paul Whiteman, general secretary of the NAHT school leaders' union have jointly written to the schools minister, Nick Gibb, asking for clarification and suggesting that the policy is either dropped, or delayed until September 2024 to allow schools time for implementation.

Maths to 18?

[The Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has reaffirmed the Government's plans to get young people in England to study maths up to the age of 18](#), setting out that a new advisory group, comprising of mathematicians, education leaders and business representatives, will be established to advise government on the core maths content that students need to succeed in future.

Taking evidence from countries which have high rates of numeracy and from employers across the country, the group will also advise on whether a new maths qualification is required for 16-18 year olds. The PM also spoke of the need to recruit and train maths teachers and the introduction of a new fully funded professional qualification (NPQ) for teachers leading maths in primary schools.

[Blog with Q&A: Maths to 18: Is maths A Level being made compulsory for 16 to 18-year-olds?](#)

Latest Research

Safeguarding – NSPCC Survey

[The findings from this survey, carried out with the teaching union NASUWT has found that over 90% of teachers say that safeguarding referrals have risen.](#)

The key findings found that 93% of teachers said that, over the last year, the number of safeguarding referrals made within their school had increased.

The survey, conducted between 20 March and 3 April this year, also revealed the types of referrals that teachers have seen an increase in over the past year:


- 87% of teachers have seen an increase in neglect referrals
- 84% have seen an increase in emotional abuse referrals
- 67% have seen an increase in physical abuse referrals
- 50% have seen an increase in sexual abuse referrals

New research explores teacher views on professional development

The [research by Ofsted commissioned by DfE](#) has found that while 70% of teachers and leaders engage in professional development, the pandemic has impacted access to this. Over half (52%) of respondents felt that their professional development was prioritised and 87% of survey respondents reported that workload pressures were a barrier to participating and engaging in training.

Although training on how to support pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and adaptive teaching approaches were identified as priority areas, this was also flagged as an area where teachers felt that they needed further development.

Governing boards have an important role in establishing a culture where the continuing professional development (CPD) of leaders, teachers and other staff is both valued and prioritised.

	<p>Reflect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How are staff CPD needs identified?• Is staff CPD considered as part of performance appraisal?• Do governors ensure that money is set aside for staff CPD and any cover arrangements?• Is a record of staff CPD included in your headteacher's report to governors?
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Thank you for all that you do for your school.

Debbi Botham
Diocesan Governance Development Officer

Diocesan communications are issued solely to support you to carry out your education functions as a Catholic school leader on behalf of your diocesan bishop. They may contain sensitive information and must be respected as private communications and not be shared with any third parties external to the diocese without written BDES consent.