



## BRENTWOOD DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE

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

November 2023

Dear chair

Welcome back to the second half of the autumn term – always such a busy but joyful one as the Christmas season approaches.

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 find this summary useful.

### Diocese of Brentwood News

*Prayer and Liturgy Directory*

The [Prayer and Liturgy Directory](#) for schools ‘To love You more dearly’ has been published.

*Catholic School Inspection - Consultation outcome and updated handbooks  
(September 2023, v2.1)*

In summary, the outcomes of the consultation are that, from September 2023, the Catholic Schools Inspectorate:

1. **has changed** the key judgement aggregate grade descriptors such that one single grade 3, will not, by itself, lead to an automatic grade 3 for that key judgement area, as outlined in the proposal and the amended aggregate descriptor;
2. **will not**, at this time, make any changes to the grade 3 descriptors.

A change has also been made to the Deferral Policy

#### 6.1 Deferral policy:

Building and/or refurbishment work is not usually a reason for deferral if the school is open and pupils are on site. However, **if a school is significantly disrupted by measures taken to deal with reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC), Catholic Schools Inspectorate co-ordinators will consider these deferral requests carefully as an exceptional circumstance.** Inspections may still go ahead when all or substantial numbers of pupils are not on site but continue to be educated through remote or blended learning.

[The inspection part of our diocesan website has been updated with the new documents](#)

### *Diocesan Protocols – revised September 2023*

The revised [2023 version of the Diocesan Protocols](#) for maintained schools and academies sets out the principles governing the relationship between the diocese and those responsible for running Catholic schools. Please ensure that these are shared with your governors and trustees and ensure compliance.

### *Diocesan Guidance on Admission to Catholic Schools 2023*

The Diocese has published [updated admissions guidance effective from September 2023](#). This replaces all previous guidance issued by the diocesan bishop.

It is the responsibility of each admission authority to ensure that their admission arrangements (which include the procedure followed, the admission criteria used, and any supplementary information relied upon), are compliant with admissions legislation, and in particular, the 2021 School Admissions Code (“the Code”) 1 .  
School admissions code - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

This guidance is provided by the diocese to support admission authorities in discharging their responsibilities. It provides guidance about the construction of admission arrangements and information on the diocese’s requirements in relation to membership and practice of the Catholic faith to which, pursuant to the Code, all Catholic schools within the diocese must have regard . This guidance will also assist admission authorities in complying with the diocesan protocols on admissions.

In the case of Catholic voluntary academies, this guidance is issued by the diocese to the board of directors and it is their responsibility to ensure that it is promulgated to local governing bodies as required. Boards of directors are also responsible for monitoring compliance by local governing bodies where necessary.

Model admissions policies and a model supplementary information form can be found here:

[Model Diocesan guidance on admission to Catholic schools – September 2023 – Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 \(Word\)](#)


### *Chairs’ Handbook*

The Diocesan [Handbook for New Chairs](#) has been updated to support you in your role. I hope you find that this gives you and your vice chair the key information you need to be effective.

### *Laudate Deum*

Pope Francis has published a new Encyclical Letter - a new Apostolic Exhortation- [LAUDATE DEUM](#)- ‘To all people of good will on the climate crisis’.

*‘Eight years have passed since I published the Encyclical Letter Laudato Si’, when I wanted to share with all of you, my brothers and sisters of our suffering planet, my heartfelt concerns about the care of our common home. Yet, with the passage of time, I have realized that our responses have not been adequate, while the world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point.’*

	<p><b>Reflect:</b> How 'green' is your school?</p> <p>Do you regularly discuss these issues and seek to improve your school's carbon footprint?</p> <p>Has your GB made a 'Greener Governance' pledge to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• reduce carbon at your school or trust</li><li>• put your school's or trust's contribution to environmental sustainability on the agenda</li></ul>
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DfE's policy paper [Sustainability and climate change: a strategy for the education and children's services system](#) sets out 5 action areas for education.

**Is there a focus on sustainability and climate action in your 5 year plan?** This should include your plans for:

- decarbonisation and energy efficiency
- biodiversity and
- climate education and green careers. It is anticipated that sustainability and climate change will touch every career in the future

### Academy News

*Appointments to Academy Trust Boards (Single and Multi)*

Please see the link to the Director/Trustee Nomination Form which must be used by all trusts for appointments and reappointments, including Non-Foundation

Directors: [DoB Catholic Education Trust – Director Application Nomination Form](#)

Please note that the appointment of a Foundation Director is only effective on receipt of the official letter sent on behalf of the Bishop.

*Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) weekly updates*

ESFA's [weekly updates](#) provide useful information for trusts.

### Governor Development

#### Online Learning

*Gift-ED*

As you know, although training via the Gift-ED App has been funded by the diocese for 4 years there is now a charge for using this valuable resource and you will recently have received an email with an order form to subscribe to 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. The Gift-ED library for governors and trustees includes:

- Faithful Governance (for new governors. A Catholic MAT version is now also available)
- Headteacher Appraisal (essential for governors serving on the Headteacher Appraisal panel)
- Engaging with Parents

- Preparing for Ofsted
- Curriculum for governors
- Appointing Headteachers/Deputy Headteachers (essential reading for governors appointed to the recruitment panel)
- Appointing Heads of RE

Subscription also includes an Introduction to Catholic Studies for teachers and a five module programme for leaders of Catholic schools. [All resources are created by diocesan education specialists in partnership with Anspear. The 12 month subscription covers all courses for all users.](#)

I do hope that you will sign up to take advantage of this valuable training in your school.

### **Webinars**

#### **NEW: Chairs' Forum**

This will be an important termly virtual event for chairs and vice chairs covering key topics as well as advice on recent Diocesan and National educational developments.

The meeting will take place online on **Monday 13 November 2023 (16:30-18:00)**. I look forward to seeing you then.

**Facilitators:** Robert Simpson, Director of Education and Maria Shepherd, Deputy Director of Education. [To book your place please use this form](#)

#### **NEW DATE: 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 webinar on **21 November 2023 (17:00-18:30)** about the directory (a repeat of the webinar held for governors in June) 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 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 – Wed 13 December 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 – Mon 22 January 2024 (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 DATE: Safeguarding Children (webinar for school governors)***

Did you miss our last safeguarding webinar? The next *Safeguarding Children* update will run as a webinar on **Monday 4 March 2024** (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.

#### *Clerks' Conference (Essex Clerks' Association)*

The provisional date for the [annual ECA Clerks' Conference](#) has been arranged for **Thursday 13 June 2024**. This free event for clerks who clerk schools in geographical Essex (including Southend, Thurrock or the London Boroughs which border Essex and/or have an Essex postcode) will take place in Chelmsford (9:00-14:00). Full details of the guest speaker and workshops will be circulated in due course but you may like to take the opportunity to mark the date in your diary and reserve a provisional place by sending an email to [bookings@essexclerks.org](mailto:bookings@essexclerks.org)

### **Governor Recruitment**

#### *Supporting new governors and trustees*

Many of you will be welcoming new volunteers to your governing board at this time of year. A well-planned induction will help new governors and trustees feel welcomed into the school community and have the necessary information and support to fulfil their role with confidence.

As well as effective 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.

BDES has updated the [model Induction checklist](#) which gives examples of the key information and support new governors in Catholic schools should receive. You are welcome to adapt the checklist to meet the needs of your own governing body.

We have also updated the [Handbook for New Governors](#). This gives key information about the role and responsibilities of governors in Diocesan schools and is sent automatically to new foundation governors - please feel free to use it for all new governors at your school to support them as they grow into the role.

#### *Foundation Governor Vacancies*

Foundation governor vacancies are advertised through the Diocesan website. As well as running periodic foundation governor recruitment campaigns through the

local parishes, we also work with *Governors for Schools* and *Inspiring Governance* to identify suitable governors for our schools.

### *Changes in membership*

**It is really important that your clerk keeps us up-to-date with changes in membership, including changes of chair and vice chair.** If your clerk has not yet sent an updated membership list for your school they should send this to [governanceappointments@brcdt.org](mailto:governanceappointments@brcdt.org) by the end of the autumn term 2023.

As well as making sure that our database is up-to-date and GDPR compliant, this will ensure that all governors serving in our Catholic schools receive the monthly *Governor News* update to help keep them up-to-date with Diocesan policies, procedures and good practice, as well as opportunities for Diocesan governor training.

We have asked clerks to make it clear where there are [foundation governor vacancies](#) so we can support schools in filling these positions. If your school is not shown and you need support in filling a foundation governor vacancy please get in touch ([debbibotham@brcdt.org](mailto: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.

### *Nomination for new Foundation Governors and Directors and Re-appointing Foundation Governors*

A reminder that the nomination and disclosure forms have been updated when seeking approval for the appointment or reappointment of foundation governors. All candidates must be practising Catholic as verified by a priest's reference.

Further details about [the criteria for becoming a foundation governor can be found here](#)

- [To request the reappointment of an existing foundation governor;](#)
- [details of a potential new foundation governor](#)

Nominations for prospective trust directors of one of the Catholic Education Trusts (CMATs) [should use this form](#)

### **Safeguarding Update**

#### *Updated Safeguarding Checklist*

Safeguarding should be the number one priority for all schools. Everyone shares the responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, but governing bodies have a strategic leadership responsibility for their school's safeguarding arrangements and must ensure they comply with their duties under legislation.

How confident are governors that the school meets all statutory requirements for safeguarding? We have updated our [safeguarding checklist for governors](#) to support you in meeting your statutory responsibilities.

### *Revised Prevent Duty Guidance - Home Office*

The PREVENT Duty was first published in 2015 in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act as a response to the increased level of youth radicalisation that year. The legislation though, is now nearly a decade old. In that time the UK security environment has changed due to growing instability in the global system, the exponential rise in the power of social media and in the past few years, a huge shift in personal technological capacity. The revised PREVENT strategy seeks to address the novel vulnerabilities formed in the wake of these modifications to the UK's threat profile.

The revised statutory guidance comes into force on 31 December 2023.

[To read the updated statutory guidance](#)

### *New national professional qualification for SENCOs*

Special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) lead and co-ordinate a school's provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

The '[National award for special educational needs co-ordination](#)' document explains the qualification which every new SENCO in a mainstream school must currently gain within 3 years of taking up their post. This was published in 2014.

A national professional qualification for SENCOs is replacing the existing qualification, as announced in the [SEND and alternative provision improvement plan](#). Teaching of the national professional qualification will begin in autumn 2024. The '[transition to national professional qualification](#)' document has more information about this new qualification and the requirements that SENCOs must meet.

### **Ofsted News**

#### *School Inspection Handbook*

Ofsted have made minor changes to the [September 2023 Handbook](#):

- providing more detail on what evidence inspectors will ask schools to provide in relation to safeguarding, to prevent unnecessary workload for schools. Ofsted have published a webinar [How Ofsted inspects safeguarding in schools | Ofsted webinar for schools](#) which explores what might constitute a need for minor improvements; the checks inspectors might make on the single central record and how they report on safeguarding
- clarifying that inspectors will want schools to provide details about adults living on school sites
- clarifying that inspectors will look at attendance when carrying out ungraded inspections of schools
- minor changes to take account of the updated DfE's exclusions and suspensions guidance

### *New Ofsted Chief Inspector*

The Education Select Committee has endorsed the appointment of Sir Martyn Oliver as Ofsted's next chief inspector who will commence in his role on **1 January 2024** subject to ratification.

### *Review of Careers Guidance in Schools*

All pupils and learners should receive quality careers guidance that raises their aspirations and leads to choices that will help realise their potential.

Ofsted has published an [independent report](#) reviewing the current state of careers guidance in schools and colleges illustrating the improvements since its last review in 2013 while acknowledging areas of improvement that need to be addressed.

The report recommends expanding careers education for younger students. The findings of the review show that most guidance begins at age 15, yet insights and skills should be developed earlier and should be provided opportunities to interact with employers. The recommendations from the research shed light on the importance of work experience and parent and employer engagement to support knowledge on career options.

Careers guidance was often underdeveloped in key stage 3, particularly for Year 7. It was not always as clear what the thinking was behind the careers programme for this age group.

**If you are a secondary school, do you have a governor with a careers lead? How do you monitor the quality of careers support in your school?** The Ofsted podcast [Are young people getting the information, advice and guidance they need?](#) discusses their recent review.

### *Ofsted subject reports*

Ofsted has published three new subject reports looking at the [quality of geography teaching](#) in the schools inspected in England as well as [PE](#) and [music](#) taught in schools.

There is also an accompanying [podcast episode](#) where the three report authors discuss what they found.

### *Update on Attendance*

Ofsted have published a [webinar which provides an update on attendance matters for maintained schools and academies](#) in England looking at how Ofsted inspects attendance and at the DfE's updated attendance guidance.

## **DfE News**

### *National Funding Formula*

The schools national funding formula for 2024/25 has been updated, following the discovery of an error by the DfE in its initial calculations, particularly in relation to forecast pupil numbers. The recalculation of funding does not affect the total amount in the core schools budget for 2024/25, but as the core schools budget is now being distributed between a larger number of pupils, the per pupil amount is reduced.

The [ESFA have published an updated schools operational guide for 2024/25 to reflect the revised NFF as well as details on the recalculation](#)



### *Schools “can and should” share RSHE teaching materials with parents*

Education Secretary, Gillian Keegan MP has [written to all schools in England](#) stating that they ‘can and should’ share relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) curriculum materials with parents.

The letter also highlights that copyright law cannot be used by external companies providing teaching resources to prevent their materials being shared.

DfE are currently carrying out a thorough review into the RSHE curriculum and are due to publish the updated guidance for full public consultation later this year.

### *Monitoring Attainment*

[KS1](#) attainment data has been published and this should be shared with the governing body if appropriate. National data shows that attainment in the phonics screening check and all subjects in KS1 has increased compared to 2022.


Please note that end of KS1 assessments will become non-statutory from the 2023/24 academic year onwards. Optional assessments will still be offered, but these statistics will not be published in 2023/24.

[Provisional results for KS2](#) have also been published, with an update expected in December 2023.

[KS4 performance data](#), focussing on GCSE results, has also been recently published. Note that there was a return to pre-pandemic grading in 2022/23 which may have affected results.

Ofsted will look at pupil achievement and how this is reflected in the results of national tests, particularly for the most disadvantaged.

### **How did attainment for your school compare with national and regional data?**

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Questions for the governing board to ask</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is your school doing to close any gaps?</li><li>• How has your school been using the catch-up and tuition funding?</li><li>• How are you checking that this has made an impact?</li><li>• How do your minutes record governor questions and challenge around pupil attainment?</li></ul>
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### *PE and sport premium for primary schools*

DfE has confirmed how much [PE and sport premium funding](#) schools will receive for the academic year 2023 to 2024 and advice on how to spend it. The [Childhood Obesity Plan](#) says that at least 30 minutes of daily activity should take place in schools and schools should use the PE and sport premium funding to help achieve this aim. It must not be used for core-type school activities. They should use it to make additional and sustainable improvements to the PE, sport and physical activity they provide, such as:


- funding high-quality PE and sport for at least 2 hours a week, complemented by a wide range of extracurricular sport and competitive opportunities
- providing or improving equal access to sport for boys and girls

DfE are introducing a new digital PE and sport premium reporting tool for schools which will capture details on how a school has used its PE and sport premium and the impact it has had on achieving the aims and objectives of the funding.

The information gathered will include:

- figures on the overall spend
- what the funding has been spent on
- whether there is any unspent funding
- swimming and water safety attainment

This digital tool will be piloted for the academic year 2023 to 2024, **becoming a mandatory requirement for schools to complete from the 2024 to 2025 academic year.**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can governors articulate how the PE and sport premium funding is used in their school?</li><li>• Where has the funding had the biggest impact? How do you know?</li><li>• How does your school ensure the continued professional development (CPD) of teachers to make sure that the future quality of the teaching of PE, sport and physical activity is sustainable?</li></ul>
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*New taskforce established to tackle teacher workload*

A [new taskforce has been established](#) with the aim of reducing teachers' working hours by 5 hours a week within three years.

Alongside measures to tackle workload, DfE is also planning an update to its teacher recruitment and retention strategy to continue to attract, support and develop the highly skilled teachers needed to inspire the next generation.

*Installing temporary buildings on school sites with RAAC*

DfE has issued [new guidance to support those who plan to install temporary school buildings, where they are needed as a result of the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete \(RAAC\).](#)

*A world class education system - The Advanced British Standard*

[DfE is proposing a new Baccalaurate-style qualification](#) for 16 to 19 year olds. Under this qualification, known as the Advanced British Standard, students will be able to take a mix of technical and academic subjects, with the aim of giving them a greater degree of flexibility over their career options. This is considered to be important in a future labour market that is likely to major on the delivery of green skills, life sciences advances, or advanced manufacturing which will need STEM skills, as well as literacy.

The plan is to bring together A Levels and T Levels into a single new Advanced British Standard qualification for 16-18 year olds. Additionally, under the new plans every student will be required to study some form of English and maths to 18.

This is a long term reform. DfE aims to consult extensively, and in detail, over the coming months on the design of the new qualification, informing a White Paper next year setting out the plan for delivery.

### *Mobile phone use in school*

[New guidance from DfE will back headteachers in banning mobile phone use throughout the school day](#) to improve behaviour and tackle disruptive behaviour in lessons. New guidance is due to be published to support headteachers in banning their use throughout the school day.

### *Data Protection in Schools*

[DfE have updated their data protection toolkit](#) which aims to help school staff, governors and trustees:

- understand how to comply with data protection law
- develop their data policies and processes
- know what staff and pupil data to keep
- follow good practices for preventing personal data breaches

Information has been added about responsibilities for making sure any personal data that pupils use in projects is used appropriately. The 'Data protection policies and procedures' section has also been updated to include links to the ICO's data controller's checklist, guidance on how to document processing activities, and guidance for organisations using CCTV. The guidance also explains that the responsibility and accountability for compliance sits with governors and trustees. Schools and multi-academy trusts risk getting a fine if they don't comply.

Governing boards must check that the school:

- Monitors their data protection performance
- Supports the data protection officer
- Has good network security infrastructure to keep personal data protected
- As a business continuity plan in place that includes cyber security

### **Latest Research and Resources**

#### *Supporting staff wellbeing in schools resource*

[This booklet](#), from the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families, offers practical guidance about what school staff and senior leaders can do to support their own and their colleagues' wellbeing.

The booklet has been developed with mental health experts, and aims to give school staff and senior leadership teams some simple guidance and good practical examples where schools have successfully implemented wellbeing strategies. Topics featured include 'What can impact or support staff wellbeing?', 'What can Supervision look like in schools?' and 'How can senior leaders prioritise wellbeing?'

BDES has also published mental health and wellbeing resources to support you:

[Model Policy on Staff Wellbeing](#) (BDES 2019)

[Wellbeing of headteachers – questions for governors](#) (BDES)

The team at Brentwood Catholic Children's Society ([BCCS](#)) has extensive in-school experience in supporting school staff and can offer support to school staff directly via regular supervision, consultations, staff therapy or through their Mindfulness programme.

*Parental Attitudes to Attendance*

This report from PublicFirst on [changing parental attitudes to school attendance](#) makes interesting reading.

*Cost of Living: Impact on Schools*

Drawing on online surveys of over 2700 teachers and senior leaders in April and May 2023, [this research, funded by the Nuffield Foundation aims to explore how the cost-of-living is affecting schools in a series of three reports](#) which establish:

- What impact do teachers and senior leaders report cost-of-living pressures are having on pupils and their households?
- How has provision in schools been affected by cost-of-living increases?
- What impact have cost-of-living increases had on school staff?

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.*