



BRENTWOOD DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE

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

February 2024

Dear chair

Welcome back to the second half of the Spring Term. I hope you are feeling refreshed after the half term break.

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

CSI Inspections

As you know, Ofsted launched an internal review into the response to the death of headteacher Ruth Perry and Ofsted has now published its [response](#) to the coroner's report which includes their action plan for improvement.

Ofsted inspections have now resumed but all school inspectors must have completed mental health training before they can lead an inspection.

As an inspectorate, CSI are confident that all of our inspectors already approach school leaders during inspection with compassion, humility and sensitivity. This is certainly part of the training they all receive, and inspectors have been reminded to remember the pressures school leaders are under, especially during inspection. The Catholic Schools Inspectorate have published a [statement](#) which addresses the report and the question of single-word judgements alongside a [summary document](#)

Religious Education Directory-SEND Guidance

[This guidance](#) is for those teaching pupils with an EHCP; it addresses the learning needs of pupils who use the Engagement Model (2020) to access curriculum learning, usually categorised using the language of severe or profound with multiple learning difficulties. Generally, this means they experience significant delays in reaching developmental milestones. They may operate at very early stages of cognitive, physical, social and emotional development.

In addition, these pupils are likely to experience at least one or more of the following:

- significant sensory impairment
- significant communication impairment
- significant motor impairment
- complex medical needs
- dependencies on technology (including augmentative and alternative communication such as Makaton)

The number of pupils taught using the engagement model should be relatively few, as these are pupils who cannot access the formal curriculum rather than those with specific educational needs and disabilities who require adaptations to the classroom curriculum.

This guidance is being shared with all CSI inspectors.

RAAC – DfE response to questions raised by the CES

DfE has announced that all schools and colleges affected by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) will receive funding to permanently remove it from the premises.

The CES has been discussing the costs associated with dealing with RAAC and various other RAAC related issues with the DfE.

We have now received confirmation in writing of the following which you may find helpful, although we appreciate that you may already be aware of these points as a result of your dealings with the DfE.

- Capital funding allocated to redress RAAC will be paid at 100% rather than 90% and there will be no requirement for governing bodies to raise the 10% contribution
- Where governing bodies have paid the 10% contribution and/or VASCA was spent on RAAC mitigations prior to the announcement that the DfE would fully fund such projects, the diocese should raise these cases with us as reimbursement may be possible
- Responsible bodies were able to reclaim the cost of RAAC surveys carried out between 30 August and 1 November up to the value of £4,000. If responsible bodies incurred costs in excess of this amount, DfE is prepared to consider requests for reimbursement on a case-by-case basis. An explanation of the reason for the additional cost should be submitted alongside the claim form and invoice. We would suggest that dioceses discuss this with the relevant DfE caseworker as the window for submitting claims has now closed
- Where a responsible body has financial difficulty in covering the costs of opening up work they should provide details by email to raac.awareness@education.gov.uk and these cases will also be considered for reimbursement on a case-by-case basis
- DfE is continuing to look into whether there is a secure way for dioceses to view the information that is held in relation to all of their schools and academies and they have committed to continuing to work with CES to facilitate this access
- If dioceses have questions in relation to specific schools, DfE is very happy to answer them
- We have received re-assurances that DfE will continue to ensure that guidance makes it clear that dioceses and religious order trustees (as appropriate) must be included in discussions relating to remediation works on trustee land.

Digest of 2023 Census data for schools and colleges in England

The Digest of the 2023 Census Data for Schools and Colleges in England is now available on [the CES website](#). Our data remains the most accurate and reliable

depiction of England's 2,087 Catholic schools, colleges and academies. Key findings include:

- 821,549 pupils are educated in English Catholic schools, up 555 from last year
- Catholic schools make up 9% of the state-funded sector
- 58% of pupils at state-funded Catholic schools are Catholic
- 47,307 teachers are employed, 46% of whom are Catholic
- 45.5% of pupils are from ethnic minorities, compared with a 37.4% England average
- Catholic schools take in 50% more pupils from the most deprived areas and approximately a quarter fewer pupils from more affluent areas, compared with the state sector
- There has been a 13% increase in the number of Catholic academies in England as more multi-academy trusts are created
- There are 79 Catholic multi-academy trusts in total.

Additional research revealed that Catholic schools also outperform national GCSE English, Maths and Religious Education averages by up to seven percentage points.

The census remains a vital tool for the CES when championing our schools and academies to parents, pupils, government partners and other stakeholders.

Governor Development

Online Learning

Gift-ED

As you know, the Gift-ED library of online courses, supporting governors in their role, has been funded for 4 years but [there is now a subscription for this valuable training](#).

You will not be able to access Gift-ED courses without a subscription. Has your school subscribed yet? Completed order forms should be returned to info@anspear.com

Governor Development

Webinars

Diocese of Brentwood Conference for Governors 2024

Our 2024 Governors Conference will be held as a series of interactive webinars over the **mornings of Tuesday 12 March 2024 and Wednesday 13 March 2024.**



Tuesday 12 March 2024	
9:15	Welcome: Robert Simpson, Director
9:30	Webinar: School Admissions-Responsibility and Accountability of Governors and Trustees (Robert Simpson, Director and Teresa Kerr, Winckworth Sherwood)
10:45	Break
11:00	Webinar: Help! Practical advice for governors and trustees in managing complaints (Rosemary Lovatt, NGA Consultant)
12:15	Address by Bishop Alan
12:30	Close



Wednesday 13 March 2024	
9:15	Welcome: Robert Simpson, Director
9:30	Webinar: The Prayer and Liturgy Directory – what governors need to know (Maria Shepherd, Deputy Director and Grace Corry, Primary School Link Adviser)
10:45	Break
11:00	Webinar: The governing bodies role in tackling educational disadvantage (Fiona Fearon, Policy and Projects Manager, NGA)
12:15	Closing Address: Maria Shepherd, Deputy Director
12:30	Close

Delegates are able to book for either or for both mornings. [To book your place](#)

NEW DATE: Chairs' Forum

This important termly event for chairs and vice chairs covers key topics as well as advice on recent Diocesan and National educational developments. The next meeting will take place online on **Monday 18 March 2024** (16:30-18:00) and we 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](#)

Date for your diaries: Following feedback from chairs, the summer term meeting will take place face to face on **Monday 10 June 2024** (16:30-18:00). Booking available soon.

NEW DATE: Role of Trustees in a Catholic MAT (CMAT)

This webinar on **Tuesday 26 March 2024** (17:30- 19:00) 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 will cover:

- What are the basics of good governance?
- How Trust Boards work
- The core functions of a Catholic multi academy trust board

Facilitator: Stephen Adamson, Diocesan MAT Development Officer
[To book your place](#)

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 13 May 2024 (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 24 June 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: Free Webinar Opportunity on SEND from Winckworth Sherwood

Schools are having to manage an increasing number of pupils with complex needs. Whilst schools are generally keen to be inclusive, dealing with the assessment and funding of SEND provision and managing practical considerations, including the behavioural challenges which often sit alongside SEND can be challenging for SENCOs, senior leaders and governors.

The [School Support Service](#) team at Winckworth Sherwood are hosting a **free webinar series on all things SEND** related on **14 March and 2 May 2024**. Each webinar will be one hour and there will be opportunities to ask questions of their expert speakers.

Using practical scenarios, the webinars will focus on:

14 March 11:00 - 12:00	Disability and reasonable adjustments <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is SEN and disability?• Reasonable adjustments• Managing pupils with SEND and behaviour that challenges• Part-time timetables• Behaviour sanctions• An overview of policy considerations	Register
2 May 11:00 - 12:00	Consultations and Annual Reviews <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How to use the annual review process effectively• Responding effectively to local authority consultations• What to do when a placement isn't working	Register

The webinar series is aimed at anyone within a school or trust with responsibility for SEND, including Headteachers, senior leaders, SENCOs, governors and trustees. Please use the links above to register for each webinar. If you have any queries please contact events@wslaw.co.uk

Face to Face training

Clerks' Conference (Essex Clerks' Association)

The next [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). You may like to mark the date in your diary and reserve a provisional place by sending an email to bookings@essexclerks.org

Governor Recruitment

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. A new recruitment campaign will be launched soon.

[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).

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.

Academy News

Congratulations to the following school who became an academy in a Diocesan Catholic Multi Academy Trust on 1 February 2024:

The Christus Catholic Trust

St Anne Line Catholic Infant School & Nursery, Basildon

Safeguarding News

Sharing Information to Safeguard Children - Information Commissioner's Office

Sharing information between educational and governmental organisations is vital to protecting children and young people. Without data sharing many vulnerabilities would go undetected, and the dots in a particular case would not be joined together.

The most dangerous point from an institutional perspective in safeguarding is the transfer of confidential information. With the advent of near universal digitisation the danger is no longer the losing of a folder, but the theft of an important document by unscrupulous individuals. The difference in the online world, is that once lost the data is often difficult to keep secure. [To find out more about the steps you should be taking towards secure data sharing](#)

Ofsted News

Ofsted has published its [response](#) to the coroner's Prevention of Future Deaths report following the inquest into headteacher Ruth Perry's death.

Resulting actions span four areas: inspector training, policies/practices, stakeholder feedback, and learning reviews. Steps include:

- Training inspectors on responding to leader distress
- Implementing a clear escalation process for inspection concerns
- Establishing a policy to pause problematic inspections
- Convening an expert reference group with external voices
- Appointing an independent expert to conduct a learning review of Ofsted's handling of Ruth Perry's death.

The DfE has also [responded](#), setting out its commitment to working with Ofsted while reviewing safeguarding judgments and guidance.

New updates to Ofsted's inspection handbooks

Ofsted's school inspection handbook and monitoring inspection handbook have been [updated](#) in relation to how inspectors respond to leaders showing signs of distress and the ways in which inspectors will engage with wellbeing of leaders generally. See '[Summary of changes](#)'.

For Independent schools:

[Independent schools inspection handbook](#) - See '[Summary of changes](#)'.

[Additional inspections of independent schools: handbook for inspectors](#)

The handbooks also now include a new section providing clarity on the [pausing policy](#). The policy sets out the processes that should be followed in the event that inspectors pause an inspection or the school/ responsible body requests for the inspection to be paused. Governing boards should familiarise themselves with this policy to understand when a pause to inspection is likely to be considered.

[Ofsted code of conduct](#)

Clarified expectations of inspectors to act with professionalism, courtesy, empathy and respect. Updated expectations on inspectors to take careful account of the well-being of leaders and staff, and for providers to make inspectors aware of how to contact the person responsible for leaders' well-being. Also added that providers are able to contact a senior leader at Ofsted if they cannot resolve or raise a concern about an inspection or visit with the lead inspector.

[Memorandum of understanding: independent schools](#) - Annual update clarified arrangements for information sharing with the DfE.
- See '[Summary of changes](#)'.

DfE News

New mobile phones guidance published

DfE has published new non-statutory [guidance](#) on how schools can develop, implement and maintain a policy that prohibits the use of mobile phones throughout the school day. The guidance aims to ensure a consistent approach across all schools, and to minimise disruption and improve behaviour linked to the use of mobile phones in schools.

Support strengthened for children with SEND

[DfE have announced that families across England who have children with special educational needs and disabilities \(SEND\) are to receive further support](#) with more short breaks, supported internship opportunities and better support for those with Down Syndrome.

DfE publish education staff wellbeing charter update

The DfE has released a progress report on their [education staff wellbeing charter](#). First launched in 2021, it sets out joint commitments from the DfE, Ofsted and schools and trusts on actions they will take to promote and protect the wellbeing of staff. The report is split into nine key areas including design-in wellbeing and driving down unnecessary workload.

BDES has published a range of mental health and wellbeing resources to support you including a [Model Policy on Staff Wellbeing](#)

New teacher training framework

DfE will be replacing the Initial Teacher Training Core Content Framework (CCF) and Early Career Framework (ECF) with a combined initial teacher training and early career framework (ITTECF) from September 2025 in order to reduce unnecessary repetition. This is one of the changes and improvements announced by the DfE following its [review](#) of the ECF and CCF.

Other changes include the development of enhanced subject-specific materials by training providers, increased content for trainees on how to support pupils with SEND, and changes to reduce the workload for mentors.

Digital Standards Guidance Published

DfE has published [new guidance](#) on digital leadership and governance standards in schools. This covers all elements of digital technology, from physical IT assets to cyber security and digital licenses and subscriptions.

Recommendations for governing boards include:

- Governing boards should consider assigning a digital link role to a particular governor or trustee
- Risk management plans need to include digital risks, e.g. a data breach or cyber attack. *These plans will be scrutinised by the board, as explained in this [guidance](#)*
- Senior leaders should create a digital strategy plan and review it annually – the board will provide challenge and support in line with their strategic remit.

Latest Research and Resources

More support needed for teaching children about online harms

The [Education Select Committee has examined the effectiveness of how online safety and digital literacy are taught](#). As part of an inquiry into screen time and how children should be taught about digital literacy and online harm, witnesses called for clearer guidance and more training on how to best deliver effective PSHE/RSHE education. There were also concerns raised about the number of young people in the UK lacking access to computer devices and the need for more regulations on edtech in schools.

Cyberattacks in an education setting

The majority of cyberattacks are aimed at stealing valuable data. For the educational sphere this data most likely relates to pupils, financial information and employee records. [IT Pro has recently published an article highlighting the changes in the nature and composition of cyberattacks and is well worth a read](#).

Generative AI in education: educator and expert views

DfE have published a report on the insights from educators and experts on the [use of generative AI \(GenAI\) in education](#)

This report highlights the findings, including:

- how the sector has responded to and adopted GenAI technology
- applications and opportunities for GenAI in education
- reported impact and benefits of GenAI use in education
- barriers to adoption and risks that GenAI presents for education
- support the sector would like to receive from the Department for Education and government

AI is becoming increasingly sophisticated, from increasingly realistic AI generated photographs, to real photographs modified by AI all the way to AI enabled voice cloning, bringing new vulnerabilities and new risks to young people and children. [Better Internet for Kids, has recently published an article laying out the ins and outs of AI and the impact its continued development, is having on children.](#)

Girls outperform boys from primary school through to university in the UK
[A study by Cambridge University Press & Assessment found more female students met or exceeded expectations, but "apparent advantages" shown by girls "are not necessarily carried through to employment" with gaps in pay, opportunities and skill utilisation still common in the labour market.](#) Young women remained underrepresented in Stem subjects (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics).

Researchers concluded that educational reforms and the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic had not changed the "direction of existing patterns" - although suggested teacher-graded assessments disadvantaged some male pupils. The data found that maths remained an outlier, with male students outperforming female students and achieving at the highest levels from early years education to A Level.

New study: The benefits of extra-curricular clubs

Attending extra-curricular clubs during secondary school is associated with a range of positive outcomes when young people are in their early twenties. This is according to a [study](#) carried out by the Education Policy Institute (EPI).

The study also found that pupils who attend clubs are more likely to progress onto higher education and be in employment. The findings also show that vulnerable pupils were less likely to attend both sports clubs, and clubs for hobbies, arts and music, when compared to their peers.

Increase in the prevalence of behaviour issues affecting both staff and pupils

One in five staff members experienced emotional or physical violence from a pupil during the academic year 2022-23, according to a new [report](#) by Edurio. The report also revealed that year-on-year disruptions reported by staff have now surpassed pre-pandemic levels, while 42% of pupils felt that their learning was disrupted very or quite often by someone's behaviour.

The report also emphasises the impact pupil behaviour is having on staff wellbeing, with 43% of staff reportedly considering resigning sometimes, often or constantly in 2022-23, with pupil behaviour the fourth most frequently cited reason.

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.