



## BRENTWOOD DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE

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

April 2024

Dear chair

Welcome back to the start of the summer term. I hope you have had a restful break and are still feeling the joys of Eastertide, coming back refreshed for the term ahead.

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

*Believing, Not Belonging– a research into why Catholics no longer come to Church*  
The Diocese has published [results of 'Bishop Alan listens' research report](#)

### *Catholic School Inspectorate -update to Handbooks*

Although CSI only normally issue handbook updates annually, at the beginning of each academic year, there are several small amendments that it became clear were needed before the September updates were issued. [Therefore, they have published a March 2024, v2.3 update.](#)

### *School Admission Arrangements*

It is strongly recommended that schools review their admission arrangements in the summer term ready for consultation in the autumn term if required.

You may find this guidance useful:

- [Model Diocesan Guidance on Admission to Catholic Schools Sept 2023\)](#)


 [Slides for admissions presentation 12.03.24.pptx](#)

### *Prayer and Liturgy Directory*

As you know, the [Prayer and Liturgy Directory](#) for schools 'To love You more dearly' has been published, for **implementation by September 2025**

Please note that governors and directors, as guardians of the Catholic school's life and mission, have a responsibility to ensure that:

- prayer and liturgy are **central to the Catholic life of the school** and therefore are **in line with the guidance set out by the Prayer and Liturgy Directory**
- there is a **named person(s)** who is responsible for prayer and liturgy in the school (the Prayer and Liturgy Coordinator)
- the prayer and liturgy **policy is updated regularly and shared with all stakeholders**
- there is a **budget** for prayer and liturgy that **reflects its centrality** to the life of a Catholic school.

	<p><b>Questions to consider:</b></p> <p>Governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As Governors are there any changes you need to make to ensure prayer and liturgy are central?</li><li>• Has the Prayer and Liturgy policy been updated? Has it been shared with all stakeholders-staff, parents, governors?</li><li>• Who is the named Co-Ordinator for Prayer and Liturgy?</li><li>• How much is the budget for prayer and liturgy? Is it enough?</li><li>• Where in your minutes is there a record of discussion about this?</li></ul> <p>Headteacher responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How have you as Governors supported the Headteacher to fulfil their responsibilities?</li><li>• Have you checked the responsibilities have been fulfilled?</li><li>• What support do you give the Headteacher in their role as Spiritual leader of the school community?</li><li>• Where is the evidence of you monitoring and evaluating this?</li></ul> <p>Training and formation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do you have a record of what is done for induction of new staff in regard to prayer and liturgy?</li><li>• Are you informed about/do you discuss/monitor/evaluate individual training?</li><li>• Are you certain there is at least annual whole staff professional development?</li></ul> <p>Resourcing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How have you as Governors evaluated the impact of the resourcing/provision?</li></ul> <p>Monitoring and Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How does your monitoring and evaluation feed into improvement/action plans?</li></ul>
---	--

*Catholic schools and colleges - Building the Future together*

Robert Simpson, Diocesan Director of Education, talked about this video by Christine Fischer (Assistant Director of the Catholic Education Service) at the last Chairs' Forum meeting. This reiterates the role of CES and the Diocese and the importance of everyone working together in a collaborative way:

Link : <https://vimeo.com/user92221413/cesfuturestogether-april23?share=copy>

Password : BDESCES2024

The strategic future of Catholic education is decided by the Bishop, supported by his Trustees. Governing bodies and Academies have a responsibility to act in accordance with those strategic decisions and to implement them in accordance with

the Objects of their school or academy; foundation governors have a particular responsibility to ensure this happens and are accountable to the Bishop for doing so.

As you know, the Bishop's strategy includes academisation as part of the common good, supporting each other to provide the best outcomes for *all* of the children and communities that we collectively serve.

### Governor Development

**REVISED DATE:** *Chairs' Forum (via zoom)*

This important termly event for chairs and vice chairs covers key topics as well as advice on recent Diocesan and National educational developments.

**Please note the revised date** - The next meeting will take place online on **Monday 17 June 2024** (16:30-18:00). 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](#)

**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** on **2 May 2024**. The webinar will be one hour and there will be opportunities to ask questions of their expert speakers.

Using practical scenarios, this webinar will focus on:

	<b>Consultations and Annual Reviews</b>	
<b>2 May</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How to use the annual review process effectively</li><li>• Responding effectively to local authority consultations</li><li>• What to do when a placement isn't working</li></ul>	<a href="#">Register</a>
11:00 - 12:00		

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 link above to register for the webinar. If you have any queries please contact [events@wslaw.co.uk](mailto:events@wslaw.co.uk)

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

The next *Safeguarding Children* update will run as a webinar on **Monday 7 October 2024** (17:30-19:00). This will focus on the next KCSIE, due to be published in the autumn term 2024, and cover all the essential information needed to understand your statutory responsibilities. [Book your place](#)

**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](mailto:info@anspear.com)

**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* (please note the *Inspiring Governance* service is ending September 2024) to identify suitable governors for our schools.

A new recruitment campaign has recently been launched through the parishes and we have started to receive applications. 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.

**Safeguarding News**

*IMPORTANT UPDATE Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023*

In December 2023 the DfE published a long-awaited update to the statutory guidance, *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (WTTSC).

On 23rd February 2024, [an update was published](#), which includes an important change to the definition of safeguarding. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is now defined for the purposes of this guidance as:

- **providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge**
- protecting children from maltreatment, **whether that is within or outside the home, including online**
- preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development

- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- **promoting the upbringing of children with their birth parents, or otherwise their family network through a kinship care arrangement, whenever possible and where this is in the best interests of the children**
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes **in line with the outcomes set out in the Children's Social Care National Framework.**

#### *Keeping Children Safe In Education 2025*

The government has announced that it is to make only 'technical' changes to KCSIE for September 2024, 'with a view to providing a more substantively updated document, encompassing wider changes, to be delivered in 2025.'

DfE has launched a 'call for evidence' from practitioners and others which they say is '...deliberately broad and seeks to reflect areas and issues that have been shared by school and college safeguarding professionals, or where wider systemic changes mean we have an opportunity to better align school and college safeguarding policy, including the findings of Ofsted's 'Big Listen.'

DfE say that 'whilst we will not be publishing the results of this call for evidence, we will consult on any substantive changes we make to future iterations of KCSIE, and school and college safeguarding policy, following this exercise, in the normal way.'

Areas covered in the call for evidence include:

- The role of the designated safeguarding lead
- Recording, retention and sharing of child safeguarding information
- Safer recruitment
- Filtering and monitoring
- Supporting children following reports of sexual violence and harassment
- Protecting children in boarding schools and residential special schools
- Quality assuring safeguarding
- Children bringing their own devices to schools
- Artificial intelligence

The survey can be completed online here: [Keeping Children Safe in Education: A Call for Evidence](#) and closes on **Thursday 20 June 2024**.

#### **Ofsted News**

##### *The Big Listen*

Ofsted launched their [Big Listen](#) in March, seeking views on how they can improve. The consultation closes on 31 May 2024.

##### *Ofsted review: careers guidance in special schools*

A [review](#) carried out by Ofsted has found that while leaders prioritise work experience and building relationships with employers, some placements lack the "knowledge or confidence" to offer learners with SEND high-quality work experience.

Focusing on careers advice in specialist settings, the review highlighted that pupil voice was "central to good careers guidance in specialist settings", as well as developing a close and trusting relationship with learners and their families.

##### *Subject report on the quality of English in primary and secondary schools*

Ofsted have published a [new subject report on the quality of English in primary and secondary schools in England](#). The accompanying [press release](#) highlights that the

teaching of reading in schools has improved significantly since the introduction of the phonics screening check but writing and spoken language need more focus.

## DfE News

### *Government guidance for Governors and Trustees (DfE)*

The Governance handbook and competency framework documents have been withdrawn and replaced with new guidance - one guide for academy trusts and one for maintained schools. The statutory policies guidance is now included in each guide, rather than on a separate webpage. The policies list has been updated and more emphasis placed on governing boards delegating the responsibility for creating and reviewing policies.

It is worth noting that the CES was not given an opportunity to provide comments on these guides before they were published. We have reviewed them and have several comments which we will be following up with the governance team at the DfE.

### Maintained schools governance

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/governance-in-maintained-schools>

Safeguarding can be found in section [7.8](#)

### Academy trust governance

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/-governance-in-academy-trusts>

Safeguarding can be found in section [7.10](#) and [7.15](#)

The academy trust guide aligns closely with the [high quality trust descriptors](#) and the [Academy Trust Handbook](#).

### *PE and Sport in Schools*

Ahead of a huge summer of sport in 2024, DfE has published [new guidance on PE and Sports in schools](#) helping schools increase access to physical activity and extra-curricular sport, including examples of good practice. The non-statutory guidance aims to support school staff, senior leaders, and governors to review their PE and school sport offer and can be used to stimulate discussions and generate ideas to create a positive and active school community through PE, school sport and wider physical activities.

### *National Wraparound Childcare Programme*

DfE via CES have asked us to bring this to the attention of our schools:

*On 27 February we published an updated version of the [National Wraparound Childcare Programme Handbook](#). This provides additional guidance and up to date information on the programme to further support local authorities with programme delivery. The key changes include: confirmation of Childcare Works as our delivery partner and outlines their roles and responsibilities, additional detail on the funding for the programme, clarity on the expectations of schools and trusts to align the handbook with the recently published schools guidance, and sets out department's position on home to school transport.*

*There is a long standing 'right to request' guidance, which allows parents to request wraparound or holiday care at their child's school and allows childcare providers to request using the school premises for wraparound or holiday care, and sets out how schools should respond to these requests.*

*As part of supporting delivery of the new wraparound programme, we have updated [the guidance](#) to ensure its alignment with the programme objectives. It now sets out the minimum expectation of schools, including engaging with the designated LA wraparound lead. The update strengthens the role of the LA, linking to their sufficiency duty, including informing schools of the availability of wraparound and ensures schools are communicating this to families.*

*In early February, we published [wraparound childcare guidance for schools and trusts](#), which sets out their role in relation to wraparound, and the support schools and trusts can expect, in particular from their LA, to meet these expectations. This guidance is designed to support schools and trusts, regardless of their involvement with the national wraparound childcare programme.*

The guidance includes the responsibilities of the governing body in relation to considering whether to establish wraparound childcare on school sites.

*DfE publishes statutory attendance guidance*

DfE has published updated [Working together to improve school attendance guidance](#) **which will become mandatory from September.**


Changes include expectations on supporting pupils with mental health or physical ill health issues, new rates for fines, absence thresholds at which penalties must be considered, requirements to share daily data and new absence codes.

## **Latest Research and Resources**

*Measuring the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils using star assessments*

A new [report](#) by the Education Policy Institute (EPI) has revealed that while the disadvantage gap has narrowed slightly from its highest point, it is still significantly higher than where it was before the pandemic. It also finds that the proportion of persistently disadvantaged pupils has increased since the pandemic across both primary and secondary age groups.

Further analysis in the report highlights concerns that the size of the gap for persistently disadvantaged pupils is almost double that of pupils who experienced disadvantage for a shorter period, meaning the differences within the disadvantage group are almost as significant as those between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils.

NGA delivered a thought provoking webinar at our recent virtual Conference for Governors [Widening the lens on disadvantage \(NGA\)](#)  [NGA Presentation.pptx](#)

You may also find these links useful:

- Anna Freud: [Targeted support : Mentally Healthy Schools](#)
- Anna Freud: [Mental health lead resource hub : Mentally Healthy Schools](#)
- Well Schools: [Well Schools - Well Schools \(well-school.org\)](#)

You may be interested to know that [NGA](#) offers a range of resources for governors and trustees in schools subscribing to their service for use with school leaders in addressing educational disadvantage in their school or trust.

### *EPI Research on Suspended Pupils*

New [research](#) by the EPI has looked at outcomes for pupils with multiple exclusions. It found that suspended pupils were, on average, approximately 12 months behind their non-suspended peers, with those suspended on average failing to achieve a standard pass in both GCSE English and maths.

It also found that pupils suspended ten times were almost three times as likely to be identified with SEND as pupils who were suspended once. Of all SEND types, social, emotional, or mental health needs (SEMH) were the most common amongst suspended pupils.

The report recommends that schools proactively identify those at risk of suspension and plan early intervention to reduce the need for suspension. Given the link between social, emotional, mental health needs and suspensions, it is vital that schools are able to recognise mental distress and work closely with healthcare professionals for support.

### *Children's Media Use and Attitudes – Ofcom Report*

[The Ofcom report](#) makes fascinating reading across a number of areas of children's media use. You can interrogate the data here: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/childrens/children-and-parents-media-use-and-attitudes-report-2023/children-and-parents-media-use-and-attitudes-report-2023-interactive-data>

Researchers at the University of Birmingham have also [published an interesting study 'Smartphones, Social Media and Adolescent mental well-being: the impact of school policies \(2023\)'](#) as part of their ongoing research called the 'SMART Schools study'.

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.*