



## BRENTWOOD DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE

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

### Governor News – April 2025

This is a monthly summary to help Governors keep up to date with key themes of national education policy, the local Diocesan context, research and good practice.

#### DIOCESE NEWS

Welcome back, we hope you had a good Easter break and wish you all the blessings of Eastertide. Following the sad loss of Pope Francis, we are sharing with you a message and a resource from CAFOD:

*It is with sadness that we write to you following the death of Pope Francis. As the world mourns his passing, Pope Francis' legacy will be remembered as one that brought the Church closer to its mission of love, mercy and justice.*

*A constant source of hope and inspiration, Pope Francis has profoundly shaped the very mission and the whole life of the Catholic school community, moving a generation of children and young people throughout England and Wales to put their faith into action, to care for our world and for those in greatest need. There is no doubt that the impact of Pope Francis's words can be found in every Catholic school in the country. We at CAFOD have seen the tangible results, as you and your schools have engaged in responding to "the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" through taking part in our climate campaigns, supporting the Big Lent Walk for many years, in solidarity with our sisters and brothers around the world, and in raising awareness of many aspects of our work that resonate with Pope Francis' teachings, from welcoming the refugee and stranger to campaigning for debt cancellation.*

*Pope Francis said that his own life story was a journey of hope. He understood that in a world that can feel scary or divided, God's love and the hope it brings is needed more than ever. In fact, he made hope the theme of this Jubilee year.*

*How poignant it is in this Jubilee year, as hundreds of thousands of children and young people in schools around or nations embark on their Jubilee journey, aspiring to his invitation to be pilgrims of hope, he is now passing the baton over to these trusted young hands.*

*We have put together a short PowerPoint for you to use in school to remember the life and legacy of Pope Francis, which includes a short reflection and prayer:*

#### [Remembering Pope Francis in schools](#)

*Further reflections and resources will be online in the coming days.*

*In the meantime, we join our voices with those of the global Church, as we remember Pope Francis in our prayers and give thanks for his life and inspiration*

#### **Multi-Academy Trusts in the Brentwood Diocese**

As you are aware, the Bishop set up an Academies Working Group (AWG) which has been meeting on a fairly regular basis to discuss the future plans for growing and developing Catholic Multi-Academy Trusts (CMATs) in Brentwood. The Bishop's vision for education has not changed; he wants all schools in the diocese to be part of a CMAT. This is in keeping with other Catholic Bishops across the country and a good number of dioceses already have full or nearly full academisation in their area. The original

plan for Brentwood was to have 8 CMATs and we currently have 6 CMATs-although none are yet entirely full.

The AWG and the diocese recognise that the educational landscape has evolved and it is clear that MATs have to be a certain size in order to fully benefit financially and in relation to capacity to support improvement. In keeping with this, various CMAT models have been discussed. The group have recently been exploring models around 2, 3 or 4 CMATs. There has been a developing view that a smaller number of CMATs might be the most sustainable option. Further information will be shared as it becomes available and there is a planned CMAT Development Conference later in the year.

## NEWS

**NASUWT could ballot members for strike action within weeks.** The teachers' union is proposing to ballot members for potential strike action as soon as the autumn term if the government fails to provide a "fully-funded" pay rise for next year [[Schools Week](#)]

### **UCL report reveals girls feel less safe in school**

[Research](#) from University College London (UCL) revealed that since the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a rapid decline of secondary students' enjoyment at school, sense of safety, belonging and their relationships with peers and teachers.

The most significant decline was found among year 9 girls. In 2023, the proportion of girls who strongly agreed they felt safe at school dropped by 22% compared to 2019, a much larger decrease than the 10% drop for boys. The researchers call for interventions to improve engagement, with a focus on supporting girls' sense of safety and their relationships with others.

**Schools are dipping into their own budgets to provide essentials for families in poverty.** School leaders report helping families with bedding, appliances such as microwaves and cookers, and heating bills as the impact of child poverty worsens [[Schools Week](#)]

### **New Government funding formula**

UK's most deprived state schools could face further cuts thanks to new government funding formula [New national funding formula](#) outlined for schools predicted as 'largest cuts to school spending per pupil since early 1980s', says IFS

**Data protection in schools:** The policies and processes schools and multi-academy trusts need to protect personal data and respond effectively to a personal data breach at [Data protection in schools - Guidance - GOV.UK](#)

[No More Marking trial](#) shows the potential power of AI to reduce marking workload for teachers [[Schools Week](#)]

**Confederation of Schools Trusts (CST)** raises concerns over [funding of RISE teams](#) [[Tes Magazine – subscription required](#)]

[The schools working against the odds](#) to support the "forgotten third" of pupils not achieving a grade 4 in English and maths [[Schools Week](#)]

### **Employment Rights Bill - What Does This Mean for Schools and MATs?**

Since the ERB was first announced in October 2024, a significant number of changes have already been proposed. It is expected that more changes will follow before we arrive at a final position, and more likely than not secondary legislation will be required to give effect to some of the proposals. [Employment Rights Bill Updates March 25.docx](#)

### **Government Sets Out Plans to Target 'Stuck' Schools**

[Link to article](#)

The Secretary of State announced new plans to tackle forgotten schools as part of [proposals for a significantly strengthened school accountability system](#) that works for parents.

There are more than 600 'stuck' schools in England that have received consecutive poor Ofsted judgements, and which are attended by more than 300,000 children. Those attending these schools leave primary school with results 14 percentage points worse on average and secondary school with results a grade per subject worse on average.

Plans unveiled by the Education Secretary provide for a stronger, faster system, spearheaded by an initial £20 million investment in new regional improvement teams, known as [RISE teams](#) which will prioritise these stuck schools. They will draw up bespoke improvement plans with those schools, with government making up to £100,000 available initially to each school for specialist support. This compares to a £6,000 grant that was available previously for similar schools.

### **Ofsted Report Cards**

[Ofsted has unveiled the new report cards](#) which they propose will evaluate schools across 9 separate areas. They also set out proposals for evaluating areas from 'exemplary' to 'causing concern', holding schools to a higher standard and providing far greater information for parents.

### **School Meals**

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) should be enrolled automatically, according to MPs [\[BBC News\]](#)

### **DfE Guidance for Governors on SEND Oversight**

[Link to article](#) - Updated February 2025

This guidance is intended to:

- support school governing boards' understanding of their role and responsibilities in relation to children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities
- empower governors and trustees to hold their schools to account

### **Data From the Office for National Statistics**

New data from the Office for National Statistics suggest more young people were **not in work, education or training** at the end of 2024, than at any point in the past 11 years. [\[BBC News\]](#)

### **School Leaders Facing Abuse**

Over 80% of school leaders face abuse from parents/carers, with 1 in 10 having been a victim of assault. Many leaders are at breaking point due to increasing hostility, with a poll of 1,600 members of the National Association of Headteachers revealing some leaders are subsequently struggling with anxiety and depression [\[Schools Week\]](#).

### **Academy trusts' growing debt brings total deficit to £65m**

[A growing number of academy trusts have fallen into debt](#) - bringing their total deficit to £65m, government data shows. Union leaders have warned the rise was another sign of the impact of government cuts to school funding. The figures from the Department for Education show 6.1 per cent of academy chains had a cumulative deficit at the end of the academic year 2016-17, compared to 5.5 per cent in 2015-16.

## **GOVERNOR DEVELOPMENT**

**Governor Vacancies** - Please see the list of current vacancies

**Chair and Vice Chair** - Please note that only **Foundations Governors** can be appointed as the Chair or Vice Chair of a Governing Board.

**Foundation Governors** - In respect of the school or college for which a person is or is to be a Foundation Governor, he or she must not at any time be:

- related to any member of the school or college staff, teaching, or non-teaching;
- related to any governor whether elected, appointed, or *ex-officio*, of the school;
- employed (whether as a teacher or otherwise) at the school.

A person (other than the parish Priest) will not be re-appointed as a foundation governor of a particular school or college if he or she has just completed three terms of office on that particular governing body.

This message appeared in a July 2024 Friday mailing, and it has come to our attention that some schools are still not adhering to this. We will now be making contact with individual schools to ensure the situation is rectified.

## TRAINING

**For all training and events see Diocese website:**

<https://www.dioceseofbrentwood.net/departments/education/events/>

### **Key Information for Governors - Documentation and Policies**

<https://www.dioceseofbrentwood.net/departments/education/school-governance-2/diocesan-guidance-model-policies/>

### **Safeguarding 2024/25 online Workshop – Monday 16 June 2025 5.30 – 7.00pm**

Schools have a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils.

Are all your governors up to date with their statutory responsibilities around safeguarding? The statutory guidance [\*Keeping Children Safe in Education\*](#) (KCSIE) places an obligation on all governors and trustees to receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training at induction and to ensure that their training is regularly updated.

This popular workshop will run as a webinar and cover all the essential information you need to understand your statutory responsibilities, focusing on the new KCSIE due to be published in the autumn term 2024.

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 their school.

Facilitator: Kathy Dee, HeadStart and 5-19 Children's Health Service Manager, London Borough of Newham

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

### **Chairs' Forum – Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> June: 4.30pm - 6.00pm**

This important termly Chairs' Forum for Chairs and Vice Chairs will cover key topics as well as advice on recent Diocesan and national educational developments.

**Facilitators:** Rob Simpson, Director of Education and Maria Shepherd, Deputy Director

[To book your place](#)

### **Governor Induction**

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 – 3<sup>rd</sup> June (5.00pm – 6.30pm)**

This module explores the distinctive ethos of church schools and the role of governance within a Catholic setting.

[To book your place](#)

#### **Module 2: An Introduction to the Roles and Responsibilities of Governors – 1<sup>st</sup> July (5.00pm – 6.30pm)**

*This module will help governors gain confidence and knowledge of the three core functions of governance and share good practice.*

[To book your place](#)

**Gift-Ed** - 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 tool. You will not be able to access

Gift-Ed courses without a subscription. **Does your school subscribe?** Completed order forms should be returned to [info@anspear.com](mailto:info@anspear.com)  
[Link to order form.](#)

## CLERKS

### Clerking Diocese schools

It is important that full Governing Boards are clerked by a professional Clerk/Governance Professional rather than a school employee such as a Secretary, PA or Business Manager. We understand that there is a cost implication, but the Clerk carries out a significant role and where this is done professionally this will have real benefits for the Governors as well as avoiding any suggestions of a conflict of interest. As well as organising and minuting Governing meetings and supporting the Board with administrative tasks, such as record keeping, to make sure everything runs smoothly, a professional Clerk makes an important contribution to the efficient and effective functioning of a Governing Board by providing expert advice and guidance on a range of statutory and procedural matters to ensure efficiency and compliance. This includes working in partnership with the Chair to keep the Governing Body focussed on its core strategic priorities and providing independent advice on procedures, statutory guidance and policies and the annual tasks and decisions that need to be made.

### Information:

#### [\(TZA\) v R, A Secondary School \[2025\] Court of Appeal - 4 March 2025](#)

Unsuccessful challenge to child's exclusion from school; 15-year-old black Caribbean boy with SEN permanently excluded for serious assault, decision of HT was not unlawful for failure to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). Seriousness of the pupils conduct and/or harm of allowing them to remain will be such as to make no difference that they belong to a high-risk group or have received inadequate support in the past.

### Supreme Court decision – legal definition of a woman – April 25

The Supreme Court argues that for the Equality Act to be consistent, the term woman has to mean a biological woman. That does not include biological males, even if they have certificates to say they have changed gender.

This means that where there are, for instance, women-only spaces, then a biological man who identifies as a woman cannot use them. That includes changing rooms, toilets, women's refuges, single-sex hospital wards and anywhere designated as for one sex only.

How much change that will mean in practice will be set out in detailed guidance. Until then, there remain lots of questions and some confusion - and that is challenging in an area where views are so polarised.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c74z04j23pwo>

[https://supremecourt.uk/uploads/uksc\\_2024\\_0042\\_judgment\\_aea6c48cee.pdf](https://supremecourt.uk/uploads/uksc_2024_0042_judgment_aea6c48cee.pdf)

### Winkworth Sherwood update

<https://wslaw.co.uk/case-study/supreme-court-ruling-in-for-women-scotland-ltd-v-the-scottish-ministers-what-schools-need-to-know/>

Equality and Human Rights Commission ("the EHRC") [Technical guidance for schools in England](#) (September 2023)

### DFE Guidance 2023 – Gender questioning children

[https://consult.education.gov.uk/equalities-political-impartiality-anti-bullying-team/gender-questioning-children-proposed-guidance/supporting\\_documents/Gender%20Questioning%20Children%20%20nonstatutory%20guidance.pdf](https://consult.education.gov.uk/equalities-political-impartiality-anti-bullying-team/gender-questioning-children-proposed-guidance/supporting_documents/Gender%20Questioning%20Children%20%20nonstatutory%20guidance.pdf)

## NEWSLETTERS

**Past Chairs and Governor Newsletters:**

<https://www.dioceseofbrentwood.net/departments/education/school-governance-2/governors-newsletters/>

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