



BRENTWOOD DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE

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

Governors' News – January 2026

This is a monthly summary designed to help governors stay up to date with key themes in national education policy, the local Diocesan context, research, and best practice.

NEWS FROM THE DIOCESE

We are committed to celebrating the outstanding achievements and initiatives taking place within our schools. If your school has recently experienced a noteworthy accomplishment – whether it be an academic success, a community project or an event that reflects the school's catholic values – we would love to hear about it. Stories will be featured on our website providing an opportunity to showcase the exceptional work happening across the Diocese or Brentwood and to inspire others.

Celebrating our schools' successes

Congratulations to St Thomas of Canterbury, Grays for the recent successes they have shared with us:

- One of their pupil's-Victor- designed an outstanding Lego creation of his dream home and was Munday and Cramer's, 'Built Environment Award Winner 2025.'
- A support staff member-Mrs Cook- was elected Unison's Thurrock winner for their 'Star in Our Schools' event 2025. She was nominated for her outstanding contribution to school life.
- St Thomas' received a Silver Award from Thurrock Foodbank for the work the School Council do in collecting food for the local community.
- Former pupil and Thurrock MP Jen Craft visited St Thomas' to deliver a prize to a pupil-Filomena- who was one of the winners of her Christmas Card Competition

Well done to all.

GOVERNANCE NEWS

The general secretary of the NEU, Daniel Kebede, has warned that the union will "absolutely strike" to protect the 1,265-hour annual limit on teacher working hours. This comes as the DfE prepares a new enrichment framework. Kebede said that without extra funding for staff, these reforms would rely on eroding workload protections for teachers [Tes magazine - subscription required](#)

Predicted grades match actual Key Stage (KS) 4 results for less than half of pupils, new data from the FFT Education Datalab has revealed. Predictions and outcomes were analysed for 140,000 pupils, with a match rate of less than 50%. However, the report noted that average grades matched results "quite closely" across whole subject cohorts [Tes magazine - subscription required](#)

Safeguarding and Wellbeing - DfE's Educate Against Hate website provides schools and parents with free, quality assured resources to help them navigate discussions on sensitive topics and confront hate and prejudice in our schools and communities. Resources on antisemitism can be found here. The following online resources may be helpful in managing difficult conversations with young people:

- [NSPCC](#): How to have difficult conversations
- [Red Cross](#): Talking with children about a major emergency (5–11-year-olds)
- [Red Cross](#): Talking with young people about a major emergency (11–19-year-olds)

Ofsted has published its first wave of report cards under the new inspection framework for 21 schools that volunteered for early inspection. Of the 143 individual grades awarded, 75 were awarded "expected standard" and 56 were "strong standard". Only 3 "needs attention" grades were issued, while 9 "exceptional" grades were awarded across 3 schools [Schools Week](#)



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The government will publish the first official screen time guidance for parents and carers of children under 5. The DfE has announced that a new working group will put together guidance on screen time for young children, following research showing that about 98% of children under 2 watch screens daily. A study published this month found that 2-year-olds with 5 hours of daily screen time could say significantly fewer words than those with the lowest screen time [BBC News](#)

The DfE has released its updated guidance on the use of reasonable force in schools. The new guidance, 'Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools', places a stronger emphasis on de-escalation and preventative strategies, and confirms the new statutory recording and reporting requirements for the use of force and seclusion [DfE](#)

The Home Office and the DfE have unveiled an £11 million investment for schools to help "stamp out misogyny and keep girls safe". The funding includes a £3 million teacher training fund for the new RSHE curriculum, a £5 million "healthy relationship training" pilot, and £3 million for a programme specifically designed to tackle harmful sexual behaviours in young people [Schools Week](#)

ACADEMIES NEWS

Co-opting Governors

Due to the difficulty in obtaining Foundation Governors and Trustees we are often asked if the Board or local governing committees can co-opt members. According to the 2024 Diocesan Scheme of Delegation (for MATs), the constitution of each **Local Governing Body** does not include co-opted Governors:

- There is no power to co-opt Governors to the Local Governing Committee but advisers (including other members of staff in the Academy) may attend meetings provided they do not take part in any decision making.

Here is a link to the [Diocese scheme of delegation](#).

Staff Governors on Academy Boards

Staff governors are not legally required in academies, though their funding agreements may specify them, and the Academy Trust Handbook strongly advises against it for trust boards to ensure clear accountability between the trust and its employees. Instead of governors, academies have trustees, who are accountable for the trust's performance and strategic direction. While staff can serve on local governing bodies (LGBs) if the trust's articles of association permit, the strong preference from the Department for Education is that only the CEO or principal serves as a trustee, with other staff members excluded from the trust board.

GOVERNOR DEVELOPMENT

Chair and Vice Chair - Please note that **only Foundation 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.



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TRAINING

We are grateful for the tremendous commitment our community gives to our schools across the Diocese. Directors and Governors play a fundamental role in the mission of Catholic education. Please do note the importance of continued relevant CPD, as set out below;

Participating in appropriate Catholic governor training is both an expectation and an entitlement for all Foundation Governors and Foundation Directors, regardless of length of service and experience. In order to ensure that this happens the Brentwood Diocesan Education Service (BDES) has produced a number of training resources. These are delivered via App, online and face to face. The diocese expects that you will complete at least one BDES Catholic module/training course a year for every year of service - a reasonable level of engagement. Where re-appointment is subsequently requested, and relevant Catholic training has not been completed, this would be a barrier for re-appointment.
Flavio Vettese, Director of Education

For all training and events for 25/26 see the Diocese website:

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

Non-attendance at Diocesan Governor Training:

We have noted several occasions where people have signed up for training and have simply not turned up and have not notified us in advance that they would not be attending. This has resulted in some people not being accepted on to courses because we understood them to be fully booked. It also adds to the administrative load both before and after a training event.

This has been highlighted with Chairs via the Chairs Forum and has also been discussed with the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE). Following the approval of the DBE we will now implement a £25 charge if people sign up for training and fail to attend or do not cancel their place on a training session at least 24 hours in advance.

Winckworth Sherwood Free Training - Dealing with Subject Access Requests in Schools following The Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 **3rd March 2026 (12.00pm – 1.00pm) online Zoom webinar**

The session will cover:

- Dealing with SARs and the duties on Schools
- Understanding relevant exemptions under the Data Protection Act 2018
- Dealing with complaints related to SARs
- How The Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 affects SARs and affects your school
- This free webinar is aimed at school leaders, Data Protection Officers and business managers, and those advising on Data Protection issues within the education sector. The session will be relevant to maintained schools, academy trusts and independent schools.

[Register here](#) (you will be sent an email from Zoom with the link when you register)

Saffron Teaching Schol Hub

- Exploring AI in your setting: the DfE, in partnership with the Chiltern Learning Trust and the Chartered College of Teaching, has released a new set of online resources and case studies to help school leaders and staff use AI safely, confidently and effectively: [AI in Education - DfE resources](#)



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DfE Find Placement Schools service

School leaders play a crucial role in shaping the next generation of teachers, and the DfE's new [Find Placement Schools](#) service makes it easier than ever to support high-quality training across the system. By updating your school's information on the service, you can:

- Help shape the future workforce: recording your school's placement capacity ensures trainee teachers can be matched where they are needed most.
- Improve communication: a simple set of questions lets you confirm whether you can or cannot host placements - either way, ITT providers get the clarity they need.
- Support national planning: your input helps the DfE understand ITT capacity across England and plan future provision effectively.

Key Information for Governors - Documentation and Policies

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

National Catholic Education Day – 5th March 2026

Catholic Schools: Meeting the Challenges of Contemporary Education

Venue: Coombe Abbey – An iconic 12th-century Cistercian abbey set amidst 500 acres of scenic grounds

Audience: Open to everyone working in Catholic Education regardless of their role or background.

Brought to you by CATSC, EducareM and their partners, leading International and National Speakers share insights on the Church's mission in education in this fast-changing world.

Speakers include Bishop Michael Brehl, Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle (tbc) and Christine Allen (CAFOD)

Conference Fee: £99 (one delegate) | £179 (two delegates from same school) Additional cost for early arrival B&B on Wednesday 4th March £111 [National Catholic Education Day: 5th March 2026](#)

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 – 3rd June 2026 (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 please [complete this form](#)

Module 2: An Introduction to the Roles and Responsibilities of Governors – 24th June 2026 (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 please [complete this form](#)

Spring Term Forum for Chairs and Vice Chairs – 26th February 2026 (4.30pm – 6.30pm)

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

Safeguarding – 25th March 2026 – (5.30pm – 7.00pm)

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



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ensure that their training is regularly updated. To book your place please [complete this form](#)

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. [Link to order form](#).

CLERKS

Clerking Diocesan 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.

Foundation Governor Appointments & Re-Appointments;

Please see the following diocesan requirements for all appointments and re-appointments of foundation governors:

- A letter on the school's headed paper which requests the re-appointment, signed by the Headteacher and/or Chair
- A fully completed disclosure form
- A Priest's reference
- *Foundation Governors will have undertaken at least one piece of **Catholic training** per year of office*

The governing boards of maintained schools must be made up of specific types of governors. In terms of governor numbers, there are legal requirements applicable to all maintained schools which must be followed, and they are listed below for your information:

The School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012

13. (1) The governing body of every **maintained** school must be constituted in accordance with this regulation.
- (2) The total membership of the governing body of a maintained school must be no fewer than seven governors.
- (3) The governing body of a maintained school must include the following—
- (a) at least two parent governors;
 - (b) the head teacher unless the head teacher resigns the office of governor in accordance with regulation 19;
 - (c) one staff governor; and
 - (d) one local authority governor.



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(4) The governing body may in addition appoint such number of co-opted governors as they consider necessary provided that the requirements in regulation 14 are met in respect of governing bodies of foundation and voluntary schools.

(5) The total number of co-opted governors who are also eligible to be elected as staff governors under Schedule 2, when counted with the staff governor and the head teacher, must not exceed one third of the total membership of the governing body.

The governing body of a voluntary aided school must also include such number of foundation governors as to outnumber all the other governors by two i.e. if you have 6 non-foundation governors, you will need 8 Foundation Governors.

Court of Appeal decision on permanent exclusion from school for serious one-off incident

The judicial review case of *R (on the application of SAG) v Governing Body of Winchmore School* [2025] EWCA Civ 1335 considered a governing body's decision to uphold a permanent exclusion following a pupil's misconduct during a school trip.

The Court of Appeal made it clear that where school policies and the DFE Exclusion guidance are in conflict the DFE guidance prevails. The school policies said PEX for a one-off offence had to be *extremely serious*, whereas the DFE Guidance states that it must be in response to a *serious breach*. Furthermore, it was inappropriate to invite the Headteacher back into the meeting to clarify issues with Governors once the meeting had ended and the parents had left.

NEWSLETTERS

Past Chairs and Governor Newsletters:

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

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