



BRENTWOOD DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE

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

Chair’s News – Spring 1 2026

This is a newsletter designed to help Chairs 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

The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson, Secretary of State for Education, has written to schools to congratulate them on their strong outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Her letter recognises their significant achievements and encourages them to share the effective practice that has contributed to their success. Congratulations to the Good Shepherd Trust where 5 of their schools received such a letter-OLOL, Ss Peter & Paul’s, Palmer, St Joseph’s and The St Teresa and congratulations to OLOG Trust where St Antony’s, St Edward’s, St Francis, St Helen’s, St Michael’s and St Winefride’s Catholic Primary Schools all received the letter of congratulations. Well, done to all!

New Foundation Governors

This term has seen a number of new Foundation Governors appointed across the diocese. Their willingness to serve is gratefully acknowledged. Governing boards continue to provide essential support to headteachers and senior leaders, helping ensure that leadership remains deeply rooted in the mission of the Church.

Flavio Vettese – Director of Education

GOVERNANCE NEWS

DfE 'particularly keen' to recruit male teachers

Education minister Olivia Bailey tells MPs that the department wants to see more men 'teaching, guiding and leading' in schools

OFSTED

One of Westminster Diocese's primary schools was inspected by Ofsted a few weeks ago and, following the experience, the headteacher has put together a detailed reflection on the process. It is well worth a read and will be particularly helpful for anyone currently in the inspection window.

In case it is useful, Ofsted has also produced a new video explaining the revised grades and how they align with the previous inspection framework. This may be helpful for parents or governors. The link is below:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/understanding-ofsted-report-cards-and-grades>



Inspection Reflections
- Jan 2026.docx

Fears over head and Sendco workload in new Ofsted inspections

Some senior leaders who have experienced the new report-card inspections have described them as 'brutal', ASCL tells schools' conference

Internal suspensions guidance boosts headteacher autonomy

The schools White Paper will introduce measures that keep more suspended pupils in school under supervision, instead of sending them home, [says DfE](#)

Amid claims that government guidance is watering down school leaders' powers, head Sophia Haughton says the opposite is actually the case

[New DfE guidance on suspensions is to be consulted on](#)

A new parent guide to complaints

A new guide for parental complaints explicitly asks parents/carers to be "calm and respectful" when communicating with their child's school. The guide also warns parents/carers to "only use AI with caution" when drafting formal complaints, noting that AI can sometimes produce inaccurate results when citing laws, and this can hinder resolution. **[Schools Week]**.

A new report by the National Governance Association (NGA) suggests that schools with effective governance are better prepared for Ofsted inspections. The report, penned by the [National Governance Association \(NGA\)](#), also stated “governance-related issues commonly precede formal intervention”. The study found that boards that provide meaningful challenge to leaders, and maintain clear oversight of the school’s strategic priorities, are also more likely to sustain improvement beyond the inspection cycle. The NGA’s report also highlighted governance as a “core component of the national accountability framework” and urged policymakers to invest in governance training, development and research [[Schools Week](#)].

A poll of more than 7,000 teachers has revealed that 38% have dealt with pastoral issues involving WhatsApp this academic year. Despite the social media app’s minimum age limit of 13, the problem is most acute in primary schools, where 44% of teachers reported dealing with incidents involving WhatsApp, such as bullying, anxiety and friendship issues. These findings have prompted union leaders to demand that WhatsApp be included in future regulations to limit children’s social media use [[Tes magazine - subscription required](#)].

The DfE has written to over 2,000 schools to signpost its universal RISE offer. Following the launch of the DfE’s Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence (RISE) scheme, the government has written to schools with the lowest attainment rates to raise awareness of the support available. The universal RISE scheme gives leaders access to a regional improvement hub, conferences, roundtables and networks for peer-to-peer support [[Schools Week](#)].

The bigger picture

Last week, the government launched a consultation on children’s social media use, which could lead to restrictions on its use for children under a certain age. The consultation proposes a variety of measures including phone curfews and restricting certain more addictive features, with an aim to improve children’s wellbeing. Ofsted inspectors will also be asked to check school mobile phone policies and how effectively they’re implemented, during inspections [[GOV.UK](#)].

ACADEMIES NEWS

[Best paid Academy CEO](#)

England’s best-paid academy boss has been given another pay rise, taking his salary to at least £530,000.

[Harris Federation](#) chief Sir Dan Moynihan took home between £530,000 and £535,000 last year, accounts show, after seeing his wages increase by around £15,000.

Schools Week analysis suggests all but three of the country's largest academy trusts handed their leaders hikes over the same period.

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** should be made up as follows:

- *such number of Foundation Governors appointed by the Diocesan Bishop to ensure that the Foundation Governors outnumber all other Governors by at least 2;*
- *the Headteacher of the Academy (or Headteachers where the Academies are federated and there is no Executive Headteacher);*
- *up to 1 Staff Governor, elected or appointed through such process as the Local Governing Committee may determine;*
- *up to 1 Parent Governor (or up to 2 for any federated Local Governing Committee), elected by parents or carers of registered pupils at the Academy and being a parent or carer of a pupil at the Academy at the time when elected;*
- *up to 1 Additional Governor appointed by the Local Governing Committee with the approval of the Trust Board.*
- ***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.

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 contacting individual schools to ensure the situation is rectified.

Annual Self-Evaluation of the Governing Body

This is a very useful document as it includes questions on the Catholic character of the school/Academy/6th form.

[Catholic Education Service, Governor self-evaluation form](#)

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.

We will include this message in the Governor Newsletters, Friday mailing to all schools and on the booking form for all Governor training with effect from Monday 1st September 2025 so that this change can be known and understood.

Winckworth Sherwood Free Training

Dealing with Subject Access Requests in Schools following The Data (Use and Access) Act 2025

- Tuesday 3rd March 12-1pm 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](#) you will be sent an email from Zoom with the link when you register

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 – date 3rd June 2026 in Summer term (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 – date of 24 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](#)

Chairs' Forum – Spring Term 26 February 2026 – 4.30 pm to 6.30 pm

To book your place please follow [Link to book](#)

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

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.

To book your place please use 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 Governors (re)appointment;

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 (please *list all completed diocesan and/or Gift-Ed training*)
- A Priest's reference (I am happy to handle this section of the process on receipt of the disclosure form)
- 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.

(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.

Further information can be found:

[https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/1034/part/3/made?view=plain#:~:text=R requirements%20for%20all%20maintained%20schools&text=%E2%80%94\(1\)%20The e%20governing%20body,no%20fewer%20than%20seven%20governors.](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/1034/part/3/made?view=plain#:~:text=R%20requirements%20for%20all%20maintained%20schools&text=%E2%80%94(1)%20The%20governing%20body,no%20fewer%20than%20seven%20governors.)

Statutory Guidance [The constitution of governing bodies of maintained schools \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/231212/2012-1034-part-3-made.pdf)

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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