



BRENTWOOD DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE

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

January 2022

Dear chair

Welcome back to a new term and a new year. I hope that over the festive period you were able to enjoy some well-deserved rest, relaxation and fun.

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 will find it a useful summary.

As we start a new term I wanted to take this opportunity on behalf of Bishop Alan, Father Stephen and Rob Simpson to thank you all for your tremendous commitment and hard work in what remains challenging times. COVID-19 continues to be a virus that we learn to live with and DfE has updated its [Covid-19 operational guidance](#) outlining the actions school leaders should take to reduce the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) in their school. This includes a recommendation that pupils in Year 7 and above should wear face coverings in classrooms. DfE no longer recommends that it is necessary to keep children in consistent groups ('bubbles').

Diocese of Brentwood News

School Admissions: Certificate of Catholic Practice

In applying the Certificate of Catholic Practice, the [latest advice from the Catholic Education Service \(CES\) is that the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation should be considered as once again operating in the normal way from the First Sunday of Advent 2021](#). Any individuals who may still be excused attendance at Mass are covered by the existing [Guidance for Clergy](#)

Diocesan Working Groups

We are looking to establish three Working Groups within the diocese to look at important areas that need further thought, reflection and development. Input from across the diocese would be useful and will help to inform the work done to preserve and develop Catholic education in the context of Bishop Alan's vision for his schools. The following bullet points are provided to try to give some idea of what might be required from those involved and to set the context:

- Attending an initial short meeting to agree how the group will operate. (*January/February 2022*)
- Attending 2-3 Working Group meetings (of no longer than 2 hours) to discuss ideas, practical considerations, tricky issues or to give feedback. (*By April 2022*)
- Commenting on any early thoughts/documentation, to develop thinking in order to produce and refine any guidance document, process or plan
- Ensuring that any document is as practical and helpful as possible before it goes to the DBE and Bishop Alan. (*Probably by May/June 2022*)

- All working Group members will be appointed by Bishop Alan.

The three Working Groups will consider:

1. Promoting Catholic Education – developing a promotional strategy
2. The Academies Picture – position, outlook, collaboration
3. Racial Justice

If you are interested in being involved in one of the working groups please email sophierussell@dioceseofbrentwood.org indicating which one together with your name and contact details.

Racial Justice

The [Diocesan Statement of Commitment to Racial Justice](#) has now been approved by the DBE. You may like to upload this to your school website, publicly referencing your agreement with it or create and highlight a statement of your own.

I was delighted to see some of you at our Racial Justice webinar in November 2021. This included speakers from [Urban Synergy](#) a youth employment charity offering e-mentoring (years 11-13) and online seminars (Years 6-13) to guide the confidence and ambitions of young people. **How does your school inspire and support young people to gain work experience and life skills?**

Governor Development

Webinars

Safeguarding Children (webinar for school governors)

The next *Safeguarding Children* workshop will run as a webinar on **Monday 17 January 2022** (17:30-19:00) and cover all the essential information needed to understand your statutory responsibilities. Suitable for all governors, but essential for those with a key responsibility for child protection and safeguarding, [you can book your place here](#)

NEW Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) webinar – governing body responsibilities

As you know, the new RSE curriculum became statutory from September 2020 and it is important that primary and secondary governors are aware of their responsibilities under the new statutory guidance. A clear line of enquiry by Ofsted for governing bodies will be around the RSE curriculum and a carefully sequenced RSE curriculum will be important in meeting safeguarding responsibilities, including sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools.

It will further address the response of the Catholic Education Service to the Statutory Guidance in the form of the October 2019 update to the CES Model Primary and Secondary RSE Curriculum, and highlight advice offered by current CES and diocesan documents such as model policies. This webinar will be taking place on **Wednesday 9 February 2022** (17:30-19:30) [Book your place here](#)

NEW Introduction for Chairs of Governors in a Catholic School

Following the launch of the Diocesan Handbook for Chairs, several of you have asked for a webinar to support new and aspiring chairs and vice chairs to explore the responsibilities of the role and share good practice.

We are pleased to deliver this new webinar on **Monday 7 March 2022** (17:00-19:00) which will cover:

- the responsibilities and powers of being the chair within a Catholic setting
- the skills needed to lead and develop the team
- the importance of building a good working relationship with the headteacher
- managing meetings and planning and organising the work

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

Induction – Being an Effective Governor in a Catholic School

The next Induction webinar will take place on **Monday 23 May 2022** (16:30-19:00). Especially useful for new governors, the webinar will also benefit governors wishing to refresh their knowledge about the role and will help governors gain confidence and knowledge of the 3 core functions of governance within a Catholic setting.

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

Maintaining and Improving the Premises and Sites of Catholic Schools

Following this popular session last year, a premises webinar has been arranged for **Wednesday 8 June 2022 (17:30-19:00)**. This webinar is particularly useful for chairs and those governors responsible for premises issues, whether in a maintained school or academy. You can [book your place here](#).

Training for Clerks

Clerks' Conference (Essex Clerks' Association)

As previously advised, the annual ECA Clerks' Conference has been rescheduled for **Thursday 12 May 2022** 9:00 –after included lunch, about 13:00 (JobServe Stadium, Colchester). The guest speaker will be Pam Langmead, who is highly experienced and respected in school clerking. Register your interest by emailing bookings@essexclerks.org. Further details of workshops will follow in due course to those who are registered.

Online learning through Gift-ED

Each school has been allocated at least 5 Gift-ED licences so if you would like to request access to the Gift ED library of online courses for further governors, please advise Sophie Russell [by using this link](#)

NEW – *Appointing Headteachers/Deputy Headteachers*

Governors who already have an access code for Faithful Governance are now able to view a new course **Appointing Headteachers** as part of the Gift-ED library. Essential for governors appointed to the headteacher/deputy headteacher appointment panel, this resource takes governors through the important steps of shortlisting, interviewing and selecting the right person for the role.

Next to be released:

- Appointing Heads of RE

Governor Recruitment

Foundation governor vacancies are advertised through the Diocesan website. We also work with local parishes, *Inspiring Governance* and *Governors for Schools* to look for suitable governors for our schools.

We have asked clerks to advise us of [foundation governor vacancies](#) but if your school is not shown and you need support in filling a foundation governor vacancy please [get in touch](#).

Academy News

Academy AGMs

The Director has written to all academies on behalf of the Corporate Trustee, Bishop Alan and Episcopal Vicar (who are the Diocesan Members of Academy Trusts within the Diocese of Brentwood under the 2019 Articles of Association), to ask that they provide some information and to attend an on-line AGM meeting with the Members. As you know the members should 'receive' the accounts on an annual basis so when academy accounts have been lodged with Companies House academies are asked, amongst other things, to provide the Members with a copy of the summary of the last set of audited accounts for the 2020/2021 financial year.

As a meeting between representatives of the Trust and the Members is now required under the Academies Handbook, the AO/CAO/CSEL and Chair of the Trust Board have been invited to attend.

Academy Articles of Association

The [model Catholic 2019 articles](#) are on the DfE website.

The DfE have published new articles of Association in January 2021 but a Catholic version of these has not yet been agreed by the CES and dialogue with the DfE in this regard is still ongoing. When any further update to the Articles becomes available, you will be advised accordingly.

Academy Director/Trustee Appointments

In relation to Academy Directors/Trustees, the Director wishes to highlight that because all Directors/Trustees must fulfil the Catholic Object associated with Catholic academies, it is therefore important that they are all appointed by the Diocese. This is a view championed by the CES and reflects practice to date.

There is some scope however, in the Articles of Association where for example if a skills gap exists, to allow Directors to be Co-opted by the Trust Board. It should however be noted that their key responsibility (as with all Directors) is to fulfil the religious object associated with our Catholic schools. In order to ensure that this happens any non-Foundation Director MUST be approved by the Diocese before taking up an appointment at a Catholic Academy. Consequently, we have updated the [Trust Director Nomination/Application form](#) for use within the Diocese of Brentwood and have already started to use it.

View my financial insights tool (VMFI)

VMFI, which provides analytical insights to support better decision making for organisations working with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), has been updated with the latest 2021 Budget Forecast Return (BFR) data. It provides a forward look of the trust's position for the next 3 years. The metrics in VMFI uses the trust's BFR data to provide valuable contextual information and, where relevant, suggest actions to help with forward planning.

Visit [View your education data](#) to access the refreshed metrics and download the updated Summary of Finances.


Find out more about VMFI on the [User guide: view my financial insights](#) guidance page.

Safeguarding Update

Arthur Labinjo-Hughes

As a result of the horrendous treatment of six-year old Arthur Labinjo-Hughes at the hands of his father and his partner [the Government has launched a national review and local inspection](#) 'to determine what improvements are needed by the agencies that came into contact with him in the months before he died.'

[Louis Donald, Director of Safeguarding at the Creative Education Trust, has created a slide deck about Arthur's Story for leaders](#) to use with staff to dispel any misunderstanding of events, and clarify the next steps the Government intends to take.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are governors confident that all staff can recognise signs of abuse and know how to report these?• How robust are the schools child protection records? How do you know?• How well does your school engage with other agencies where there are concerns about a child?• Do you have a governor with responsibility for safeguarding? When did they last have safeguarding training? The next Safeguarding Children webinar for governors runs on Monday 17 January 2022 (17:30-19:00)
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Ofsted News

Ofsted Checklist for Governors

The judgement on governance is evaluated as part of the judgement on the effectiveness of Leadership and Management. In making this judgement, inspectors will consider the criteria set out in the [Education Inspection Framework](#) (EIF). This includes how effectively governors work with school leaders to communicate their vision and ambition for the school to stakeholders.

To help you prepare for Ofsted we have developed [guidance for governors giving tips on preparing for the meeting together with a quick checklist outlining key areas to help you be ready for Ofsted](#)

Changes to Early Years Inspection Handbook

Please note that here have been changes to the [Early Years Inspection Handbook](#) (para 101) re-emphasising the focus on Communication and Language.

Inspecting 'Outstanding' schools

In 2019, an audit of Ofsted found that 1,620 schools had not been inspected for six years or more, including 296 which have gone without for more than a decade and a small number for up to 13 years.

Following this information, schools previously judged by the watchdog as 'outstanding' are now no longer exempt from the routine inspection. All 'outstanding' schools last visited before 2015 will receive a full inspection, while those primaries and secondaries awarded the top grade since then will get short visits.

Video: Christopher Russell on inspecting outstanding schools - Chris Russell, Ofsted's National Director, Education, talks about how all schools that have previously been judged outstanding will be inspected over the next years.

Impact of the pandemic

[Ofsted has been asked by the government to inspect all schools by summer 2025](#), to give a quicker assessment of how well education is recovering from the pandemic.

DfE News

Education staff wellbeing charter

The mental health and wellbeing of staff in education settings has always been important, but it is now more important than ever in the context of the pandemic and moving towards recovery. [This charter](#) sets out commitments from this department, from Ofsted and employers working in education on actions to protect and promote the wellbeing of education staff.

Mental health support for school leaders

DfE has announced a new mental health support scheme specifically for school leaders. The scheme will be delivered by the charity Education Support and will provide free one-to-one counselling and peer support to around 2,000 school leaders, helping those at deputy head level and above with their mental wellbeing.

[Find out more about how to access the programme](#)

New rules to drive down cost of school uniform for families

Schools will need to follow statutory guidance which requires them to make sure uniform is affordable for all. The new [cost of school uniform statutory guidance](#) means schools must ensure that school uniform costs are reasonable, and parents get the best value for money. **Governing boards should be compliant with much of this guidance by September 2022.** Advice for schools on [developing their school uniform policy](#) is also available.

Pupil Premium and PE and Sport Premium

A reminder that DfE has published [guidance for governors and school leaders on using their pupil premium funding effectively](#), as well as [advice for primary schools on how the PE and Sport Premium should be spent](#).



- Can governors articulate how the Pupil Premium funding is used to support disadvantaged pupils? Is this published on the school website?
- Where has this funding had the biggest impact? How do you know?
- Can governors (primary schools) explain how the PE and Sports Premium Grant is spent and the impact of these decisions? Is this published on the school website?

Draft Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy

DfE has launched its [draft sustainability and climate change strategy](#) with a final strategy due for publication in April 2022.

External Review of Governance Guidance

[DfE has recently updated its external reviews of governance guidance](#) (ERGs) The guidance is intended to encourage governing bodies and academy trusts to undertake ERGs regularly as part of a positive, proactive tool for continuous improvement and growth. You will also see this message emphasised in the latest version of the Academy Trust Handbook. When did you last review the effectiveness of your governing body?

Understanding your data


DfE have updated [Understanding your data: a guide for school governors and academy trustees](#). This resource brings together a range of data to help boards analyse, discuss and challenge the educational and financial performance of their school or academy trust. The changes:

- update and improve all sections to provide new information and to reflect changes in policy
- include new subsections on cyber security, additional support for pupils with special educational needs or disabilities and governing body composition
- links to additional sources of information, such as the 'View my financial insights' (VMFI) tool

Latest Research

The impact of school closures: Why reception year is so crucial to a child's development

A [recent report](#) by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) has found that children in year one in the 2020-2021 academic year - those who had missed significant periods of their reception year education during COVID-19 school closures - were three months behind the expected level in reading, and one month behind in maths. Ofsted has re-emphasised the importance of reading at the heart of the curriculum for successful reception classes with early mathematical concepts another key element of teaching and learning in this foundation stage.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are the books that reception pupils read closely linked to the sounds that each pupil has learned?• What about pupils with SEND?
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Thank you for all that you do for your school.

With best wishes and prayers

Debbi Botham Diocesan Governance Development Officer