



Go-Governance - a newsletter for Governors and Clerks

Issue 6 - September 2017

Introduction

I sincerely hope you have been able to find some time to enjoy a refreshing break and may I welcome you back for the new school year.

New Chairs and Clerks

The start of a new school year often sees a change to the Chair of Governors and Clerk to Governors at many schools. To ensure that records are kept up to date and that correspondence is sent to the correct persons, it is vital that any changes (including contact details) are notified to the Diocese and your Local Authority (LA) as quickly as possible. Also if any Foundation Governors have notified you that they have resigned, (or that they intend to resign), please ensure the 'Resignation Form' <http://schools.cliftondiocese.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Resignation-Forms-March-17.pdf> is also returned to me.

Action Point: Clerks to notify Diocese and LA (as appropriate) of any Clerk, Chair or Foundation Governor changes as quickly as possible.

Circulation

It is important that all members of governing bodies are fully informed and kept up-to-date with all issues affecting schools and governing bodies. I have received some feed-back indicating that unfortunately not every governor has been receiving their copy of the Go-Governance newsletter or other Department newsletters, which can adversely impact on the effectiveness of governing bodies.

Action Point: Clerks to ensure that Go-Governance, and other Diocesan newsletters, or the link to them, are always passed on to **all** members of the governing body.

Updated Department for Education (DfE) Guidance

The Department for Education has produced an updated 'The constitution of governing bodies of maintained schools' document that provides statutory guidance for all maintained schools (not academies).

http://schools.cliftondiocese.com/?page_id=1596

Pages 11 and 12 of the Guidance covers 'Publication of governors' details and the register of interests'. The start of a new school year, particularly if there have been changes to the governing body, is a good time to ensure that your school website obligations are in accordance with the Guidance.

Action Point: *Governors and Clerks to read and ensure website is up-to-date.*

Catholic Education Survey (CES) Survey

The formation of school leaders and the exercise of good governance are strategic priorities for Catholic education. Four regional hubs are being formed that will bring together Diocesan Schools Commissions, Catholic Universities and Teaching Schools to form, nourish and sustain Catholic teachers, school leaders and governors.

The initial hub meetings have been scheduled for the autumn term. At these meetings, participants will consider the formation provision that is currently available, the priorities for each region and how each hub will operate. To assist with these discussions, a short survey for Catholic school governors, teachers and head teachers has been produced. We would be grateful if you could take a few minutes to complete this survey so that your views can be considered. The survey can be accessed at <https://tinyurl.com/FormationSurvey>

Action Point: *If possible Governors are requested to complete the survey by the deadline of 15 September (but I'm told the survey will still be open over the week-end!).*

Raising the Governor Profile

As I'm sure you're aware, the recruitment and retaining of new governors is a major difficulty for many schools within the Diocese. It is therefore vital to raise the profile of the governor role and one of the ways of doing so is to publicise when governor meetings are being held. Meeting dates should be regularly included in school parent newsletters. Parish Priests should be asked to include meeting dates in parish newsletters - this will particularly help to raise awareness of the Foundation Governor role, so that it is rightly seen as a Church ministry, alongside other roles within the parish, rather than as a separate entity. As public meetings, governor meetings are open to anyone to attend as an observer, a general open invitation to attend could be included in all school and parish newsletters.

Action Point: School and Parish newsletters to regularly include meeting dates.

Instrument of Government

As you may be aware, the Clifton Diocese Trustees have decided to incorporate a new company limited by guarantee, so is currently going through a legal process of becoming 'incorporated'. The result of this, is that all our maintained schools within the Diocese will need to have a revised Instrument of Government (IOG) with effect from 1 January 2018. I will therefore be in contact with all schools (but not academies as they do not have an IOG) concerning this in the near future.

Time to apply for a primary school place

Now that this school year has begun, it means that now is the time for parents to apply for a place for children due to start school in the 2018-19 school year.

To try to ensure that Catholic children do not miss out on a place at a Catholic School, due to parents failing to apply by the closing date and/or failing to provide a baptism certificate, please (if you were not already planning to do so), include in your school parent newsletters, a prompt to remind parents of children already at the school, that they need to apply again now, if they have a younger child born between 1 September 2013 and 31 August 2014. Not only does this help to ensure that parents apply but it is also vital evidence to present to Appeal Panels when parents apply after the closing date and are refused admission.

I have emailed all parish priests to request that they also include a notice in as many parish newsletters as possible between now and the closing date (15 January 2018) about the need to apply and to provide a copy of a baptism certificate. Please support your Parish Priest with this by giving him the website address for online applications in your Local Authority and any other necessary details.

Action Point: School and Parish newsletters to include a prompt about the need to apply, between now and 15 January 2018.

Cyber Security

Please always be very mindful of security requirements. Where possible school email accounts should be created for all governors, which should be regularly checked and **not** diverted to personal accounts. Governors must ensure that other family members or work colleagues don't have access to the account they use and **must** avoid circulating sensitive personal information where possible, unless protected with a security measure. Schools are responsible for their data protection and should have an acceptable use policy in place to cover the use of email.

Action Point: Governors to ensure they have an 'acceptable use' policy in place. Governors and Clerks to always ensure sensitive information is never shared by email unless securely protected.

Coordinated Admission Schemes

The Catholic Education Service (CES) have issued the following advice concerning the above.

'where the local authority (LA) co-ordinates in-year applications, the LA must not make the decision about whether to offer a place at the school. Since the governing body is the admission authority, it is for the governing body to make all decisions about admission to the school including in-year applications. The right of the governing body of a Catholic school as the admission authority and, therefore, the body which is entitled to make decisions in relation to admissions, has always been central to the protection of the Catholic character of the school.'

Governing bodies should not, therefore, agree to the inclusion of any such provisions in the Scheme.'

Governors must therefore ensure that all **In-Year** possible admissions are considered by the governing body, including those who have been refused all their named preferences for other schools and that they are not automatically allocated a place by the LA.

Not every LA operates an **In-Year** scheme but they all operate a **New Intake** Scheme. As **New Intake** Coordinated Admission Schemes have already been consulted upon & agreed for 2018-19 those arrangements can continue as published but schools should ensure that when their LA is proposing a Coordinated Admission Scheme for 2019-20, that it does not include the ability for the LA to consider applications for our schools and/or to allocate alternative places at Catholic Schools. I appreciate that some schools are prepared to receive such 'alternative place' allocations to help fill vacant places but this new advice means that governors must ensure that such placements are not automatically allocated by the LA but that governors are approached in advance and then make the decision about whether to allocate a place or not.

Whilst LAs may assist with the ranking of applications, any rankings (and Waiting Lists) provided by an LA, must always be agreed by governors (and not by just one individual).

Action Point: Governors to ensure all possible In-Year admissions are considered by them and to check their LA proposed Coordinated Admission Scheme for 2019-20

ACADEMIES

i) Many thanks to those academies who responded to my email related to applying to the Secretary of State for possible changes to their Articles of Association concerning the requirement of some Foundation Directors to also be eligible to be parent governors. I am waiting for responses from two academies and will be in contact with you again once I'm able to update you further on the progress of this.

Action Point: Outstanding responses to be returned as soon as possible.

ii) If your academy has elected a new Chair of Governors, please ensure that the new chair completes a 'Deed of Adherence' and that Company House is also informed, as these are legal requirements. Just let me know if you need a copy of a Deed of Adherence. **Action Point: Any new Chairs complete and return a 'Deed of Adherence' as and informs Company House soon as possible.**

iii) It is also a legal requirement that every year Members, Directors (Governors) and senior academy staff, complete a signed Declaration of Related Party Interests and a Fit and Proper Persons return. Each Academy should produce its own forms to be individually signed by each relevant person, including one for Bishop Declan who is a Member of each academy. The intention is that Bishop Declan will sign his form for each academy by their Annual General Meeting (on 6 or 7 December 2017)

Governors should liaise with their School Business Managers to ensure this task is completed annually.

Action Point: All appropriate people make signed declarations and each academy submits a form via bill.mcentee@cliftondiocese.com for Bishop to complete by 15 November 2017.

iv) As mentioned above, the Annual General Meeting for each Academy will be held on 6 or 7 December at Alexander House. Full details, including the exact date and time slot for each academy will be sent out in the near future.

Action Point: 6 and 7 December dates to be kept free!

Admissions 2019-20

All governing bodies **must** review their admission arrangements every autumn to decide if they wish to make any changes to them. If after reviewing them, governors decide that they wish to alter them from 2018-19 school year, you must undertake a formal consultation by 19 December to be completed by 31 January at the latest.

New updated admissions guidance for 2019-20 will shortly appear at http://schools.cliftondiocese.com/?page_id=104 that explains what is required.

Action Point: All governing bodies to review their admission arrangements.

Foundation Governor appointment process

Bishop Declan requires a fresh application to be made and for references to be obtained for both new and renewing governor appointments. We appreciate that this process may seem unnecessary for those who are already existing governors. However, as with all aspects within the educational landscape there have been significant changes and there are requirements that must be met and fulfilled. One of those requirements is that the appointing person responsible for governors i.e. the Bishop, has to ensure that due diligence has been undertaken at the time of appointment and that it is transparent and provides equality of opportunity for others to be considered. There also has to be due diligence related to what training has been undertaken. It is therefore because of the above factors that we require even experienced governors to reapply. So, if your term of office is due to end in the near future and you wish to apply for another term, we hope you understand our reasons for requiring you to go through the nomination process again.

Due to issues concerning cyber security, I regret that we've unfortunately had to close-down the online application site for Foundation Governors until further notice. However, the separate nomination forms for both Clergy and non-Clergy applicants are available on our website

http://schools.cliftondiocese.com/?page_id=110 for download. These are PDFs rather than in Word format, so that the important questions on the form cannot be edited. As the forms include confidential information, completed forms should always be posted to me rather than emailed, unless protected with a security measure, such as being encrypted with a password.

Action Point: Clerks to check the term of office dates for Foundation Governors to ensure nominations for a new term of office are made two months before the current end date.

Return of Governance training template

Many thanks for the return of the Governance Training Template forms that have been submitted for the last school year so far. I've not received a form from every school so please return your 2016-17 form if you've not already done so.

The recording of training is an on-going requirement and please use the 2017-18 training template form http://schools.cliftondiocese.com/?page_id=2013 to log all training undertaken during the year ahead, ready for the return to be submitted at the end of the school year.

Action Point: Any outstanding 2016-17 Training forms to be emailed to bill.mcentee@cliftondiocese.com as soon as possible and 2017-18 training to be logged.

Self-Evaluation of Governing Bodies

As previously mentioned the Catholic Education Service (CES) has produced a model Self Evaluation Form http://schools.cliftondiocese.com/?page_id=1596 (ces-medel-sef-november-2016) to help governing bodies with the important task of self-evaluation. Self-evaluation should be used on an annual basis. OFSTED Inspectors will look for evidence that governors have undertaken self-evaluation and use of this form is good evidence of having done so.

The (CES) would like to hear **your** views on the suitability of their Self Evaluation form as a tool to help you with your self-evaluation. Please would you, if you've not already done so, use the form to assist you with your self-evaluation and then kindly let me have your feedback on the suitability of the CES form so that I may pass it onto the CES and to the Clifton Catholic Diocesan Education Foundation Resources Committee.

Action Point: Feedback on Self Evaluation forms to be submitted to bill.mcentee@cliftondiocese.com

Next Issue

If there are any issues you would like to see raised in any future issue, please just let me know.

Best wishes for the year ahead.

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