



called to be a people of

# hope



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*Deepening prayer, enabling communion, strengthening mission*

*'As we begin this new year, let us ask ourselves: Do I know how to see with the heart? Do I know how to look at people with the heart? Do I take to heart the people with whom I live? Or do I tear them down by gossip? And above all, do I put the Lord at the centre of my heart, or other values, other interests, like advancement, riches, power? Only if we take life to heart will we know how to take care and overcome the indifference all around.'*

**Pope Francis January 2020**



Welcome back from what I hope was a restful break and one that was able to be shared with family and friends. We are now past the shortest day and can look forward to lighter nights and spring when new life really begins. We are still on the journey towards that time, but it is something to look forward to as we perhaps struggle with the cold months of January and February. As the saying goes 'there is light at the end of the tunnel!'

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## EDUCATION MASS & LAUNCH OF THE YEAR OF COMMUNION

2019-2020

A sincere thank you to all school personnel who attended the diocesan education mass and launch of the Year of Prayer. It was a great turn out and was greatly appreciated not only by the department but by Bishop Declan who is very mindful of the time commitment and distances travelled to attend. He

has been particularly impressed at the manner in which his schools have engaged with a Future Full of Hope and the 3 year focus on specific themes.

### **ANN FOWLER Deputy Director for Schools & Colleges**

You may already be aware that Ann will be relinquishing her role at the end of May. I am not allowed to use the term 'retire' as she says she would still wish to be engaged in education for a while, but she does wish to enjoy a bit more leisure time.

It goes without saying that her knowledge and commitment will be greatly missed and that a replacement in terms of like for like will be difficult to find - as we know we are all unique. The trustees are currently involved in reviewing the needs of the department in the current landscape and so will seek to find a replacement in the next couple of months.

A farewell and thank you mass has been scheduled for the **14<sup>th</sup> May at 7pm**. However, we are still seeking confirmation as to the venue. Jenny Fitzgerald will be notifying schools as soon as we have final details.

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### **RECRUITMENT**

At the present time the following schools will be involved in the recruitment of senior leaders

- St Mary's Bradley Stoke – Headship
- St Louis Frome Deputy Headship

# Leadership Newsletter

**Congratulations** to Michael Jaffrain, Principal of St Brendan's Sixth Form College on his new position as Principal of Loreto Sixth Form College, Liverpool. He takes up his position after the Easter break. I am sure you join with me in thanking him for the work he has done at St Brendans and wishing him and his family the best on their journey north. The trustees of the college have undergone a recruitment campaign and I am pleased to announce they have been successful. Marian Curran, currently Vice Principal, has been appointed as Principal.

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## BUILDINGS

Thank you for returning the **compliance audits**. Whilst we have not as yet had 100% returns we have over 90% which is great. These are currently being compiled into a data base and will be shared with the property department. It is hoped that the sheet that has been used will serve as a good overview for governing bodies to check compliance at a basic level and ascertain any gaps that need to be filled. It is important that dates for services are recorded and governors or a governor has oversight to ensure no slippage which may impact on insurance should a need arise to make a claim.

**Action: If you have not already done so, please return the audit with dates.**

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## SCA FORMS (formerly known as LCVAP)

The closing date for bids was **17 January 2020**. Once collated, a date will be set for the capital funding committee to meet and allocate funding. As yet we are not sure of the amount that the diocese will be given. The panel will comprise of Derek Salmon Property officer, Janet Parker Finance Officer and Lyn Murray Chief Operating Officer. I along with a representative from Hookways will sit on the board to support and Jenny Fitzgerald will act as clerk for the panel and provide any documentation to support decisions. The outcome will be published on the schools department website following the allocation of funding.

**Question: Has the school recently had a school maintenance survey to support their asset management plans?**

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## DEVOLVED FORMULA CAPITAL GRANT

Several schools have brought to our notice that the annual DFCG assurance programme has not run this year. Usually the ESFA ask Governors in about May to make a return showing how much DFCG has been spent in the previous financial year; given that the funding stream has a three-year lifetime. We have been assured that there is an intention to ask for a return for last year, but we do not know yet when this will be. It may be that they ask for this year's and last year's at the same time so we would advise schools to identify the balance of each previous year's funding separately in the Governors' Fund accounts.

**Question: Do governors have a clear accounting and tracking system for DFCG money?**

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## FINANCES

With a greater scrutiny on school finances it is important that school leaders are fully aware of documentation related to them. For maintained schools it is the Schools Financial Value Standard handbook and for academies it is the Academy Financial handbook. These do change on an annual basis and so it is important that the changes are picked up and actioned as necessary.

**Question: Does someone on the governing body have a good working knowledge of the appropriate compliance document?**

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## PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPIL NUMBERS

In analysing the current number of pupils entering our primary schools it is evident that there is a drop in the number of applications. Whilst many of our schools are reaching their overall Published Admission Number (PAN) a significant number are not. With the expansion of schools over the last few

years and the building of new schools to cope with the 'baby boom', it has now resulted in a surplus of places in many areas. This has a significant impact on schools that receive a 'requires improvement' judgement by Ofsted or are placed in a category. With a surplus of places, it allows parents to move between schools. It is therefore of great importance that as schools you are aware of the number of surplus places available in your area and any forthcoming dips in order to be financially astute.

**Question: What are numbers like in other local schools and are you in a position whereby you could lose pupils or not fill places?**

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## NEW OFSTED FRAMEWORK

We have had a few schools who have been inspected under the new framework. Those who have had this privilege, whilst finding it overall a better system, have found it challenging in terms of the focus on middle leadership across all subjects and the depth of investigation for deep dives.

I would encourage all schools to attend a briefing on the new inspection framework and where a school in your partnership has been inspected ask them to speak about their experience. A focus on non-core subjects to subject leaders may prove to be a good theme for partnership working.

The format of school inspection reports has changed considerably. They are quite short and limited in what they say. This I believe makes the attendance of governors at the final feedback meeting very important in order to hear the actual comments. It should also be noted that the meeting can be clerked, which may be beneficial as I know it is very difficult to take notes and listen at the same time.

**Question: Have you looked at the new reports? Has anyone on the governing body attended training related to the new framework?**

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## CHARACTER EDUCATION:

From September 2019, Ofsted inspections recognise the importance of schools' provision for character education through its inclusion in the new judgement on Personal Development in all Section 5 and Section 8 inspections. The full DFE guidance document is available using the following link [Character Education](#). However, I have summarised the six-character benchmark features into an audit document which is available with this newsletter to assist schools in evaluating their provision and future planning.

**Question: Are you clear how this is being tracked and the provision being provided?**

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## DIOCESAN STRATEGY

There are ongoing significant conversations within partnerships related to a move towards MATs, with many partnerships now establishing working parties of governors from each of the schools to explore options. Paul Kehoe has and continues to provide support to these groups, as do the Regional Schools Commissioners Office. The Academy Project Board met for the first time in October 2019 to agree its Terms of Reference and consider one formal application. The outcome of the Board was to allow the MAT application to proceed with specific caveats relating to the proposed leadership structure and governance.

As partnerships consider the way forward, it is worth re-emphasising some key messages that were stated at the initial launch in June 2019:

- Due diligence by the Diocese will be undertaken on the appointment of Foundation governors to the MAT Board which will include an open recruitment process;
- Significant permanent leadership structures will need to be openly advertised.

The next Board meeting is January 29<sup>th</sup>, followed by one on 2<sup>nd</sup> April. Any documents to be considered by the Board need to be submitted at least 10 working days prior to the meetings.

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### ON LINE GOVERNOR TRAINING

Can I please bring to your attention a couple of on-line training sites that I believe would be useful for governors and leaders to look at. Of course, you may have already accessed them.

1. [Improving Church Schools Governance](#)
  2. [Governance of Schools](#)
  3. [Formatio induction training governors of Catholic schools](#)
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### DIOCESAN WEBSITE

Can I remind you to make use of Phil Gibbons, our Communications Officer, and the diocesan website to celebrate any events or awards or information you want known. It is important that people see the good work going on within our schools.

And finally, a reflection from Bishop Declan December 2019

*'If we follow the teaching of St Paul, we will understand more fully the responsibilities that all of us have for the spread of the Gospel, for the Kingdom of God. In accepting that responsibility we will be in communion with one another and with God. We will also recognise that we live not just for ourselves but for all people. We work for the common good, which often means we have to be healers and reconcilers. We may have to take the initiative and reach out to those who we would rather not know and who would rather not know us. We are brothers and sisters no matter how we might wish to deny it. We belong to the human race which is called in its diversity to be one.'*