



Department for Schools and Colleges

Go-Governance - a newsletter for Governors and Clerks

Issue 21 - April 2021

Introduction

Welcome to this edition of the *Go-Governance* newsletter. I hope you were able to have a happy and holy Easter break and hope that you are now able to benefit from the relaxation of some of the Covid19 lockdown procedures.

1) Are you ready for the new School Admissions Code?

As previously advised, the Department for Education has undertaken a consultation (that ended in October 2020) on amendments it is planning to introduce to the School Admissions Code. It is anticipated that nearly all of the changes that were proposed in the consultation, will be included in a revised Code that is expected to be released in the near future and be effective from **1 September 2021**. Some of the likely changes are:

- Schools must notify parents of the outcome of their in- year application in writing, within **10** school days of receipt.
- Requests from your Local Authority for details of the number of vacancies in your school **must** be responded to within **2** school days.
- Schools must provide information on their websites as to how in-year applications can be made and how they will be dealt with, including

providing a suitable application form for parents to complete when applying for a place.

- Applications for children under your Local Authority Fair Access Protocol must be considered within **20** school days.
- Applications for Children who appear to have been previously Looked After abroad, will have to be given priority in the same way as such children living in the UK.

Admissions policies for 2022-23 may need to be altered to reflect this but further guidance on this will follow in due course, so please do not alter your arrangements now.

Because these changes are very likely to come into effect on 1 September 2021, it is vital that schools start planning now, to ensure that they are ready to apply them from September 1st. To support you, I would recommend the following:

- a meeting of the admissions committee be scheduled for every 10 days from early September to ensure that all In-Year applicants can be notified within the legally required 10 school days (obviously meetings can be cancelled if no applications are received).
- increasing the number of members on an admissions committee to help ensure that at least 3 x members will always be present to make decisions. Please remember:
- no individual should make decisions on admissions
- members of staff (apart from the Head), should not be on the committee
- governors have to meet (either in person or remotely where technology allows), as decisions cannot be made via email.

In addition to being ready for the new Code, primary schools should make preparations for In-Year applications to be made on your new In-Year application form*. Also, as In-Year applications for primary schools (and some secondary schools) will not be coordinated by your Local Authority*, schools will need to prepare for notifying parents of the outcome of their applications in writing. Where refusing admission, the letter **must** include the reason for refusal and information about their right to appeal. (*Except for the few schools whose arrangements specify otherwise.)

Once the new Code and any guidance is received, I will of course share it with schools.

2) - Prepare now for New Intake applications for 2022-23

As I'm sure your aware, when applying for admission, parents/carers of Catholic children must provide a copy of their baptism certificate (or of Reception into the Church) to verify the child is Catholic. This should normally be provided by parents/carers before the relevant national closing date for new intake applications (31 October for Year 7 transfer intake and 15 January for Reception Intake). Where it is not provided by the closing date, schools should **not** chase parents for it, as other parents could complain that their child has been denied a place as the school did not follow their own published admission arrangements. The onus is on parents to comply with the requirements of the admissions policy and to provide any supportive evidence by the closing date. However, to try to avoid Catholic children being refused a place for September 2022-23 because their parents/carers did not provide the required evidence of Catholicity, schools should do their best to make parents aware of the need to provide a copy of the Baptism/Reception certificate to the school, in advance of applications being received. This could include, but not limited to:

- repeated articles in parent newsletters
- repeated articles in Church parish newsletters
- repeated articles on school and parish websites
- posters in school reception areas and Church noticeboards
- Clergy being asked to mention it at the end of Masses

Where schools are in areas that include a significant number of families where English is not their first language, all of the above should also be provided in the other languages that are prevalent in the local area. Some communities often have Masses and newsletters in their own language and so these could be targeted to raise awareness. Please consider what other strategies you can use to engage with these communities, to best raise awareness of the need to apply and provide supporting evidence. Appeal Panels may often take into account the measures taken by schools to raise awareness for parents where English is not their first language.

Even though it may seem far away, we would greatly encourage governors and schools to consider **now** what measures they can put in place for applications for the 2022-23 school year, as parents/carers in most Local Authorities will be able to apply from this September.

Sometimes schools receive a baptism certificate from an overseas Church where it is difficult to determine if the Church is an Eastern Catholic one. The Catholic Education Service has produced a guidance document to try to help schools determine if a Church is an Eastern Catholic Church (that must be accepted as Catholic) or is an equivalent non-Catholic Church, that must not be accepted. The document is attached to the email with this newsletter for schools to keep.

3) Governor Grievance Policy

I am pleased to say that complaints about a governor by other governors are, thankfully, rare. However, they do unfortunately occasionally occur and obviously need to be dealt with in an appropriate way. Whilst all schools should have a Grievance Policy that hopefully covers complaints from a member of staff or parent about a governor(s), it may not cover complaints about a governor(s) made by another governor. Experience has shown that such an omission usually only comes to light once a complaint has been received, which can cause unnecessary stress and also delay in the complaint being dealt with. In order to protect yourselves, could you check your Grievance/Complaints Policy, to see if it covers complaints made by governors. If it does not, please would you revise it to do so or produce a separate governor complaints policy. A little time on this now could prevent a lot more work and difficulty in the future!

4) Refresher Training Session

The next Diocesan training session will be on Saturday 24th April 2021 - 10.00 am - 11.30 am. It is primarily aimed at experienced Foundation Governors, but as it will benefit any governor, we encourage all governors of whatever category to attend, to help you keep abreast of diocesan requirements as a Catholic governing body. It will be a remote session via Microsoft Teams and please just visit <https://schools.cliftondiocese.com/courses> to reserve a place.

5) Academy AGMs

The dates for the Annual General Meetings of academies with Bishop Declan for 2021 have been scheduled. They will be spread over 4 days as indicated below. A decision on whether they will be held in person or remotely via Microsoft Teams will be made nearer the time and you will of course be notified. Please would you note the date and time of the AGM for your academy.

Monday 29/11/21	Time
St Nicholas of Tolentine Primary, Bristol	09.00am
St Joseph's College, Swindon	09.45am
Holy Family Primary, Swindon	11.00am
The Rosary Primary, Stroud	11.45am
Tuesday 30/11/21	
St Augustine's College, Trowbridge	09.00am
Holy Cross Primary, Swindon	09.45am
St Catherine's, Swindon	11.00am
St Mary's Primary, Swindon	11.45am
Thursday 02/12/2021	
St Patrick's Primary, Bristol	09.00am
St Edmund's Primary, Calne	09.45am
St Joseph's Primary, Devizes	11.00am
Holy Rood Primary, Swindon	11.45am
Friday 03/12/2021	
St Teresa's Primary, Bristol	09.00am
St Peter's High, Gloucester	09.45am
St Mary's Primary, Churchdown	11.00am
St Bede's College, Bristol	11.45am

6) Academy Undertakings

It is a legal requirement that all governors at an academy sign an undertaking to confirm that they will uphold the Object of the academy, as specified in the academy's Articles of Association. However, a recent audit has shown that the Diocese has not received an undertaking from many governors. To help address this, where we have not received all of the undertakings, I have sent an

Undertaking form to the Clerk to Governors of the academy, requesting that they arrange for the governor(s) to complete the Undertaking form by 10 May. Please would Clerks always ensure, that an Undertaking form is submitted to the Diocese as soon as a new governor (of any category) is appointed.

Next Issue

Please just let me know if you would like anything included in the next issue. As I'm mainly working from home, please email or call my mobile number below, if you need to contact me.

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