



Department for Schools and Colleges

Go-Governance - a newsletter for Governors and Clerks

Issue 24 - September 2021

Introduction

Welcome to the first edition of *Go-Governance* for the 2021-22 school year. I sincerely hope you've been able to have a refreshing and relaxing break and are ready to face whatever challenges the year ahead may bring.

1) - New Video to attract new governors!

We are very aware that many schools are unfortunately operating without their full quota of governors. To encourage recruitment of new Foundation Governors, we have produced a promotional video <https://vimeo.com/592918008> in which Bishop Declan and some of our governors & heads, talk about the importance and value of the Foundation Governor role. It will soon be available on the Diocesan website and will be included in the Diocese newsletters. It will also be sent to all parishes for inclusion in parish newsletters and websites. Obviously, the more people who see the video - the greater the likelihood of attracting new governors, so please also post it on your school website and include it in your newsletters to parents and share it with anyone who may be interested in being a governor. We pray for a successful response.

2) Code of Conduct

As previously advised, at your first meeting of this new year, it is appropriate for all governors to sign a 'Code of Conduct'. Schools should only use the model Code of Conduct provided by the Catholic Education Service (CES) as it provides protection specifically for Catholic schools and is available at: [Codes of Conduct for Governors and Directors \(catholiceducation.org.uk\)](https://catholiceducation.org.uk)

3) - CPD Booklet Of Courses 2021-22

Our 'Booklet of Courses' <https://schools.cliftondiocese.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Booklet-of-courses-2021-2022-updated-2.pdf> detailing all the various training, conferences, retreats, Masses and events provided by the Diocese for pupils, staff and governors throughout 2021-22, is now available. Please see what is available for you and your school. In particular, please note the following training sessions for this autumn:

- **Refresher for Experienced Governors** - 23 September 6.30 - 8.00pm
- **Admissions (for all Governors/Clerks)** - 30 September 6.30 - 8.00pm
- **RE Link Governors** - 2 October - 10.00am - 12.00pm
- **Clerks to Governors** - 5 October - 6.30 - 8.00pm
- **Induction for New Governors** - 18 November 6.30 - 8.00pm

Apart from the RE Link Governors event, all of the above sessions will be held virtually, via Microsoft Teams, so you can attend from your home.

The Refresher and Induction sessions are both open to **all** governors, of any category and it has been wonderful to welcome Parent, Staff & LA governors, in addition to Foundation, at our recent sessions. As a requirement of appointment, Bishop Declan expects governors to attend training, so please would experienced governors who have not attended the **Refresher** session since being reappointed, and any new governors who have not yet attended the **Induction** session, make every effort to attend, either on 23 September or 18 November, as appropriate.

The Admissions session was introduced last year to help governors & clerks gain an understanding of the requirements involved in all aspects of admissions. It was well received, so will now be an 'annual fixture' and will be updated to reflect the requirements of the new School Admissions Code.

In addition to the above events, Louise White, RE Lead Adviser is holding special sessions on 'Working Together', for RE Link Governors, Heads of RE and RE Coordinators to provide guidance on monitoring of RE & RHSE, auditing resources and what the RE Leads and Governors should be looking for and doing together. There will be one session for each Partnership Group held at a school within the group. Details of the venues & dates are in the Booklet of Courses.

Just visit <https://schools.cliftondiocese.com/courses> to reserve a place for any event by completing the simple online booking form

4) - New Guides for Governors & Clerks

Our booklet '**A Guide for Foundation Governors**' [A-Guide-for-Foundation-Governors-August-2021.pdf \(cliftondiocese.com\)](#) written specially to support governors in their role, has been updated for 2021-22. Whilst this easy-to-read document, is primarily aimed at Foundation Governors, it is a helpful guide for governors of any category and so all governors are encouraged to read it.

We have also updated our booklet '**A Guide for Clerks to Governors**' [Governor Induction Handbook \(cliftondiocese.com\)](#) for 2021-22, to help support both our new and experienced Clerks in the particular area of Clerking at a Catholic school. A must-read for all our Clerks!

5) - New procedure when appointing new Governors

Following receipt of feedback, we have reviewed the process for appointing new governors in relation to obtaining their DBS and Section 128 clearance. New Foundation Governors will no longer be issued with their formal letter of appointment, until confirmation of DBS & 128 clearances has been received by the Diocese. In addition to the Chair & Clerk, the officer at the school responsible for undertaking the DBS checks, will now also be notified when a new appointment has been made - but the governor must still not be allowed to commence their governor duties. Once the Diocese has been informed by the school that DBS & Section 128 clearances have been obtained, we will then issue the formal letter of appointment, including the dates of their term of office, and will confirm when the governor may start their duties. This new process should help to ensure that DBS clearance is applied for within the legally required 21 days of appointment and enable new Foundation Governors to

commence their governor role as quickly as possible. I shall be writing to the officer responsible for undertaking the DBS checks (as well as to Chairs & Clerks) at every school concerning the revised process. Please just let me know if you have any queries about it.

6) Admissions Arrangements for 2021-22

Please excuse me if you already have the following matters in hand but, as they are important, may I just remind everyone of some issues mentioned in Issue 23 in July:

i) Nearly all **primary** schools are now responsible for undertaking the full process for In-Year applications and so parents should apply directly to the school using its own In-Year application form, rather than via their Local Authority (LA), as has previously applied in some areas. In addition, the new School Admissions Code, requires schools to inform their LA **by 1 October 2021** if they will, or will not, be part of any LA In-Year Coordinated Scheme that may be offered - so you should inform your LA that you will **not** be part of any scheme (unless your 2021-22 arrangements say otherwise).

ii) The new Code also requires all schools to set out on their websites, how In-Year applications will be dealt with. This is a legal requirement and must be complied with **by 31 October 2021** at the latest (and by 31 August in all subsequent years) and applicants **must** receive a written response within 15 school days.

iii) As previously advised, all schools are legally required to vary your admission arrangements for both 2021-22 (and 2022-23) to include provision for children who appear to have been adopted from state care outside of England and many thanks to all the schools who have already varied their arrangements and sent them to me. As this is a legal requirement, any school that has not already done so, **must** make the necessary changes to your arrangements as a matter of urgency, to be legally compliant.

7) - Reception Intake applications for 2022-23

Every year some parents unfortunately miss the closing date or forget to provide their child's baptism certificate and so risk missing out on a place at a Catholic school for their child. All the LAs* in the Diocese, will be open to

receive applications for 2022-23 by 13 September 2021. Please would you therefore help parents, by including the following notice, or something similar, in all your newsletters to parents and on your school website, from now until 15 January 2022:

Time to start school? If you have a child born between **1 September 2017 and 31 August 2018**, then **now** is the time to apply for a place at our school for admission from **September 2022** onwards. You must complete an application form that is available from the school admissions team of **[INSERT NAME OF YOUR LOCAL COUNCIL(S)]** Council. Please ensure you apply by the closing date of **15 January 2022**. If your child is Catholic, you **must** also provide a copy of the baptism certificate to the school by this date.

** Except for Gloucestershire County Council, who will not be open for applications until 3 November 2021. Schools in Gloucestershire should either wait until then to include a notice or should make clear in their notice that parents cannot apply until that date.*

I will contact Parish Priests to ask them to include a similar notice in parish newsletters & websites.

Where a baptism certificate is not provided by the closing date, schools should **not** chase parents for it, as other parents could complain that their child has been wrongly denied a place, because 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 certificates by the closing date. To try to avoid any problems, in addition to repeated notices in parent & parish newsletters/websites, schools could also:

- Put posters in school reception areas and church noticeboards
- Ask clergy to mention applying & providing a baptism certificate, at the end of Masses.

Where schools are in areas that include a significant number of families where English is not their first language, notices in newsletters and websites should also be provided in the other languages that are prevalent in your local area, which can be easily done using Google Translate. 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 such communities. Appeal Panels may often take into account the measures taken by schools to raise awareness for families from abroad. This may involve some additional work now, but it will save schools a lot of time and hassle later-on, if it avoids Catholic children being denied a place, so will be very worthwhile!

8) – Admission Arrangements for 2023-24

i) Primary Schools:

Please remember that the common admission arrangements are still in place for all our primary schools and so Bishop Declan does **not** expect schools to deviate from the common arrangements (unless specifically requested to do so by the Diocese) when determining your arrangements for 2023-24 (apart from rolling forward the dates) and they should be determined during the autumn term.

It is a legal requirement that governors have regard for the Bishop's guidance, and this is contained in our Admissions Guidance booklet

<https://schools.cliftodiocese.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/ADMISSIONS-GUIDANCE-August-2021-PRIMARY.pdf> and it has been updated for 2023-24 and to reflect the requirements of the new School Admissions Code.

ii) Secondary Schools:

As you may recall, in November 2020 the Diocese consulted with all secondary schools about the possible introduction of common admission arrangements (including standard oversubscription criteria) for the 2023-24 school year. Thank you for the responses that were received, which will be considered at the next stage of the process. We have also sent an email to all our primary schools and Local Authorities to request their views on the proposed possible arrangements. As mentioned in the email sent on 1 September to all secondary Chairs, Clerks & Heads explaining that, the matter now needs to be considered by the Diocesan Schools & Colleges Committee, Chaired by Bishop Declan, which is scheduled to meet on 21st October. Because governors are legally required to have regard to guidance given by the Bishop (see para. 1.38 of the School Admissions Code) and so need to make an informed decision when considering arrangements, please refrain from making a decision about your arrangements,

until you have been notified of the decision made by the Diocesan Schools & Colleges Committee. We aim to notify schools **by 29 October** at the latest. Updated Admissions Guidance for secondary schools, reflecting whatever decision is made by the Committee, will also be issued at that time. If a public consultation on the arrangements is required, it must start by 3 December to meet legal timescales. Governors must therefore meet between **1 November and 2 December 2021** to consider 2023-24 arrangements. Please just let me know if you've any queries.

9) - Academies

i) As you may know, legislation specifies that academy Chairs **must** complete a suitability check as soon as they are appointed. So, if any new Chairs are elected, please ensure you undertake the check as quickly as possible. For more information, read 'Academy trust chair suitability checks' [Academy trust chair suitability checks - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academy-trust-chair-suitability-checks) Any existing Chairs, that have not already done this, must also do it as quickly as possible as it is a legal requirement.

ii) As I'm sure you are aware, all governors, of any category, are legally required to sign a form of Undertaking, to confirm that they will uphold the Object of the Academy Trust. Please would Clerks ensure, that any new governors who are appointed (including Heads) at the start of (and during) this school year, sign an Undertaking form and submit it to me, as soon as possible after their appointment. Just let me know if you need an Undertaking form.

10) - Education Sunday

Every year 'Education Sunday' promotes, and gives thanks for Catholic education, in parishes throughout the country. This year it is on 12 September and the Bishops' Conference has released the following 'Key Facts', based on the 2020 CES census:

- There are 2113 Catholic schools in England.
- Catholic schools make up 10% of the national total of state funded schools.
- 824,862 pupils are educated in Catholic schools.
- 63% of pupils at Catholic state funded schools are Catholic.

- 314,803 pupils in Catholic schools are not of the Catholic faith.
- 47,546 teachers work in Catholic state funded schools, of which 49% are Catholic.
- 42.1% of pupils in Catholic schools are from ethnic minority backgrounds (34.6% nationally).
- 19.4% of pupils in Catholic primary schools and 17% in Catholic secondary schools live in the most deprived areas (13.1% and 11.4% nationally).
- 80.5% of Catholic secondary schools are Ofsted good or outstanding compared to 76% nationally.
- Catholic schools outperform the national average at KS2 by 5 percentage points and at KS4 by 4.5 percentage points.

These facts are cause for staff and governors to feel justifiably proud of what they achieve and are well worth celebrating and deserving of appreciation. The Bishops' Conference has also released the following prayer of thanksgiving:



Dear Lord,

Thank you for the gift of Catholic schools.

Thank you for all those who have given their talents to educating our young people. Through the challenges they encounter each day, lead them to an ever deeper appreciation of the sacred duty to which you have called them.

Thank you for all those who contribute to the efficient running of our schools; support staff, kitchen staff, maintenance staff, governors and chaplains. We thank them for their hard work and dedication.

Thank you for all those who lead our Catholic schools. May they be people of integrity so that they can be witnesses as well as teachers. We pray that the schools they lead will become places where our young people can experience your love in their lives.

Thank you for our pupils. May your love strengthen and nurture them through the influence and example of those who care for them. We pray that through their time at school they will flourish and grow to discover who you have called them to be.

We make this prayer through your Son, Jesus Christ, our teacher and our Lord,
Amen.

Next Issue

As always, please just let me know if you would like anything included in the next edition of *Go-Governance* and once again, may I offer you my best wishes for the year ahead.

Bill McEntee

Governance Officer

Mobile: 07710094976

bill.mcentee@cliftondiocese.com