



Department for Schools and Colleges

## ***Go-Governance - a newsletter for Governors, Directors and Clerks***

Issue 31 - September 2023

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### **Introduction**

Welcome to the first edition of *Go-Governance* of the 2023-24 school year. I sincerely hope that you had a well-earned rest and an enjoyable summer.

### **1) Education Sunday - 10 September**

Education Sunday falls on the second Sunday of September just as the new academic year starts and is one of the oldest Days of Special Prayer in England and Wales, established 175 years ago in 1848. It provides an opportunity to celebrate and give thanks to all involved in making Catholic schools places of enlightenment, as well as to look forward in anticipation of the year ahead. To help celebrate, the Catholic Education Service (CES) provided a range of resources: <http://catholiceducation.org.uk/schools/education-sunday>

As mentioned in my recent email to Chairs, this day may be a suitable occasion to try to attract new Foundation Governors by making an appeal at the end of Mass. Teachers at one school could be ideal governors at another school. Bishop Declan has therefore sent a special letter to SLT members at all schools, encouraging them to consider becoming a trust director or a governor at different school from where they work. This can help to fill governor vacancies, share good practise, and support career development. This ties in with the National Governors Association 'Educators on Board' campaign [Calling educators: a governing board needs you | National Governance Association \(nga.org.uk\)](http://nga.org.uk)

Please encourage eligible teachers from your school to become a Foundation Governor at another school within the Diocese.

The CES is promoting governance recruitment

<http://catholiceducation.org.uk/about-us/news-items/item/1003777-catholic-schools-need-your-help> as part of Education Sunday and their website also includes resources <http://catholiceducation.org.uk/guidance-for-schools/governance/item/1003603-foundation-governor-recruitment> to aid attracting new volunteers.

## 2) Governors' visits policy

All schools should have an agreed 'Governors Visits Policy' in place, that details in what circumstances, governors will visit the school & help governors stay on track during visits, and school staff know what to expect when they're visited. The National Governors Association provide a model visits policy <https://www.nga.org.uk/knowledge-centre/school-visits-guidance/> that governors may find helpful and The Key also provides one for its members <https://schoolleaders.thekeysupport.com/policy-expert/leadership-governance/governors-visits-policies/#section-0>

## 3) 'Governors for Schools' video conference 2023

The 'Governors for Schools' service annual conference is on 26 & 27 September. It will cover a range of topics, each no more than one hour long, that you can attend remotely. Take a look <https://governorsforschools.org.uk/conference-timetable-2023/#> to see what may be of interest to you.



## 4) Updated Guides

Updated 2023 guidance on various topics is now available from the Diocese, the DfE & NCOGS to support governors & clerks and some of them are listed below:

i) NCOGS Clerking handbook [NCOGS-Clerking-Handbook-A4\\_2023-2.pdf](#)  
([cliftondiocese.com](#))

ii) DfE Academies handbook [Academy Trust Handbook - Academy Trust Handbook 2023 - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

iii) DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education [Keeping children safe in education 2023](#)  
([publishing.service.gov.uk](#))

iv) Diocesan guidance for Foundation Governors [A-Guide-to-Foundation-Governors-2023.pdf](#) ([cliftondiocese.com](#))

v) Diocesan guidance for Clerks/Governance Leads  
<https://schools.cliftondiocese.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Clerk-to-Governors-Guidance-2023.pdf>

## 5) Admissions Arrangements for 2023-24

Just a reminder that the School Admissions Code (paragraph 2.26)

<https://schools.cliftondiocese.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/New-Code.pdf>

requires that schools must set out on their website how parents can apply for an In-Year school place, when they will be notified of the outcome of their application and details about the right to appeal. This is a legal requirement, to be complied with **by 31 August 2023** - so please action this if you have not already done so.

## 6) Reception Intake applications for 2024-25

Every year some parents unfortunately miss the closing date and/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 2024-25 **by 25 September** 2023. 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 the end of September until 15 January 2024:

**Time to start school?** If you have a child born between **1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020**, then **now** is the time to apply for a place at

our school for admission from **September 2024** 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 2024**. 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 2023. 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 these communities. Appeal Panels may often consider 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!

## **7) Admission Arrangements for 2025-26**

Please remember that the common admission arrangements for both primary & secondary schools are in place 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 2025-26 (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 booklets:

Primary schools: [Microsoft Word - Admissions Guidance 2019-20 \(cliftondiocese.com\)](#)

Secondary schools: [Microsoft Word - Admissions Guidance 2019-20 \(cliftondiocese.com\)](#)

The new common admission arrangements determined for **secondary** schools, includes provision for children of other denominations, other faiths and for children of school staff. The Diocesan Schools & Colleges Committee is balloting **primary** school governing bodies about the possibility of introducing such provisions within the common primary policy (my email to Chairs of 25 August 2023). Governing bodies are requested to consider the proposals by 30 October. If the proposals should ultimately be approved by the Committee, it would require a public consultation before they could be included in school policies, and so could not be introduced until the 2026-27 school year. Schools must therefore **not** include any such provisions in their 2025-26 arrangements.

## 8) DBS Protocol

Please may I remind everyone, that to ensure Safeguarding compliance;

- i) that in accordance with the DfE 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' statutory guidance, school/trusts **must** always see a **paper copy** of a governor's enhanced Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) certificate (and so must not just rely on the electronic notification given by their DBS checking service provider).
- ii) that new Foundation Governors/Directors are appointed only on a provisional basis (pending DBS & Section 128 clearances) and so are **not** permitted to start their role until the checks have been cleared and the Diocese has confirmed their appointment. Please can Clerks & Chairs ensure that new Foundation Governors/Directors, do **not** commence their duties, attend meetings etc. until they have received a subsequent email from the Diocese, confirming that their appointment is no longer provisional and stating when they may start their role. We recommend that schools do not permit governors of all

other categories to start their role until DBS clearance has been confirmed.

- iii) the above points are included in the updated Diocesan DBS Foundation Governor/Director protocol [DBS-Protocol-for-Foundation-Governors-Directors-August-2023.pdf \(cliftodiocese.com\)](https://schools.cliftodiocese.com/courses/courses-calendar) that has been sent to the person responsible for undertaking the DBS & 128 checks at each school. Please can Clerks liaise with them whenever new appointments are made to avoid any undue delay in getting new governors started.
- iv) Bishop Declan requires that Foundation Governors must renew their clearances at least every 4 years, so if your DBS clearance is dated within 2019-20 it will expire in the 2023-24 school year. Please therefore liaise with the DBS officer at your school, to arrange for your DBS clearance to be renewed in good time.

## 9) Diocesan Training

The following training events are available during the autumn term:

i) **Training for RE Link Governors** (by Louise White, RE Lead):

Day 1 - 7th September 2023 - The role of the RE Link Governor

Day 2 - 13th September 2023 - The new RE Directory (RED)

Day 3 - 21st September 2023 (repeated on 1st February 2024) - Section 48

ii) **Admissions Training (for governors, clerks & staff)** - 28th September 2023

iii) **Clerk Training (for Clerks, Governance Leads/Professionals)** - 12th October 2023

iv) **Refresher Training (for experienced governors)** - 4th November 2023 (Saturday)

v) **Induction training (for new governors)** - 16th November 2023

All the sessions are open to all governors of any category, and are via Microsoft Teams, from 6:30pm - 8.00pm (except the Refresher Training session which is 10.00 - 11.30am). Visit <https://schools.cliftodiocese.com/courses/courses-calendar> and complete the Course Booking Form to reserve a place on any of the above sessions.

## 10) Code of Conduct

Just a reminder, that as mentioned in the last edition (No. 30), at your first meeting of the new year, all governors of any category should sign a 'Code of Conduct' provided by the CES [Codes of Conduct for Governors and Directors \(catholiceducation.org.uk\)](http://catholiceducation.org.uk) Any new governors that join the GB during the year, should sign it before or at, their first meeting.

## 11) Free micro:bits for primary schools

The BBC are providing free micro:bits for primary schools. Visit [BBC micro:bit - the next gen - BBC Teach](https://www.bbc.com/teach/microbit) to register your school.

## 12) Safeguarding Update - Security Guidance

Recently there have been a number of incidents in the proximity to schools that have led to them being put into 'lockdown'. In one, a rampaging bull was killed outside a school in Cheshire, and in another, six people were badly injured by two dangerously out-of-control dogs in the West Midlands. A third situation followed a police alert of a 'suspicious vehicle' in North Yorkshire. **Does your school have effective lockdown procedures to keep children safe inside the school?**

Whilst it is important to know what to do in these thankfully rare incidents, often this will mean ensuring staff know what to do, without unduly alarming pupils, especially younger children. The DfE have issued guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-and-college-security> for schools.

## 13) Academy AGMs

Please may I just remind all our academies, that your AGM with Bishop Declan has been scheduled as detailed below - please note your time & date. Formal letters of invitation will follow later this term:

### Thursday 18/01/24

St Patrick's Primary, Bristol	10.00am
<a href="#">St Joseph's College, Swindon</a>	10.45am
Holy Family Primary, Swindon	12.00pm
<a href="#">The Rosary Primary, Stroud</a>	12.45pm

### Friday 19/01/24

St Augustine's College, Trowbridge	10.00am
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Holy Cross Primary, Swindon	10.45am
St Catherine's, Swindon	12.00pm
St Mary's Primary, Swindon	12.45pm

#### Thursday 25/01/2024

St Edmund's Primary, Calne	10.45am
St Joseph's Primary, Devizes	12.00pm
Holy Rood Primary, Swindon	12.45pm
Dunstan CET	14.15pm

#### Tuesday 30/01/2024

St Bede's College, Bristol	10.00am
St Peter's High, Gloucester	10.45am
St Mary's Primary, Churchdown	12.00pm
Cardinal Newman CET	12.45am

### 14) 'Governors Tonight' - a bit of light relief!

I thought you might enjoy seeing how one governing body feels when they have a meeting:

<https://twitter.com/kateowbridge/status/1673925990949502976?s=46&t=MWciJ4lGZdUh7FzENwVVXg> If you are equally as enthusiastic, perhaps you would like to produce your own video & I'll share with everyone!

### 15) Feast of St Nicholas of Tolentino - 10 September

*O God, source of strength and courage, you gave your beloved preacher, Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, the conviction of faith to the very end. Grace us with the ability to translate your teaching into action, remain patient amid hardship, serve the poor and those who suffer, and live as your true and faithful servants. Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, pray for us.*





## 16) Best wishes for 2023-24

Many thanks for all that you do for our schools and may I offer you my best wishes for a successful year ahead. Please just get in touch if I can be of any assistance.

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