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Dear Parishioner

I am writing to you about something that lies close to my heart and, I believe, close to the heart of the Church: the future of Catholic education in our Diocese.

Catholic schools have been a beacon of light in this country since as early as 600 A.D., first founded by monastic communities as places of learning, formation, and faith. After the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in 1850, the bishops of England and Wales articulated a vision to prefer the establishment of good schools before churches. That vision has borne great fruit over generations.

Here in the Diocese of Clifton, we are blessed with over 60 schools - many of them built with the hard work and sacrifice of Catholic immigrant communities. Today, those schools continue to serve thousands of young people, supported by dedicated headteachers and a quiet army of volunteer governors and directors who offer their time, energy, and love in service of our children.

But the future of our schools now stands at a crossroads.

At present, there are around 100 vacancies for Foundation Governors and Directors across our Diocese. Without these essential roles, the mission of our schools, and the Catholic ethos that makes them so special, is at risk.

And so, I tum to you with a heartfelt invitation: might you consider becoming a Foundation Governor of one of our Catholic schools, or a Foundation Director within one of our three Catholic Educational Trusts?

To echo the words of the late Cardinal Basil Hume: *"To be a governor of a Catholic school is to be involved in the mission of the Church."* And what a beautiful mission it is to help shape young minds and hearts, to offer them not just knowledge but wisdom, not just skills but purpose, not just education but an encounter with Christ.

The role of a Foundation Governor or Director is, in essence, to be a witness, to help ensure that our schools remain places where Christ is known and loved, where the dignity of every child is cherished, and where Catholic values infuse the curriculum, the culture, and the community.

As St. Gregory the Great once said, *"The love of Christ is not rested until it works to shape the hearts of others.* " Your time and talents could do just that for the next generation.

You don't need to be an expert in education - just a practising Catholic, aged over 18, who is willing to serve. People from all backgrounds are warmly welcomed, and full training and support are provided. The time commitment varies from school to school but averages out at less than one hour a week.

If you, or someone you know, has benefitted from a Catholic education, this may be a chance to give back to continue the legacy and renew the mission.

To find out more, please visit our website www.schools.cliftondiocese.com/governance and watch our short 'Governors Video'. You'll hear from current governors, directors, and headteachers about the difference this role can make. To apply as a Foundation Governor, please complete the 'New Governor Nomination Form'. You'll find the video and the nomination form under the heading 'Recruitment'.

If you have questions, or if you are interested in becoming a Foundation Director in one of our Catholic Education Trusts, please contact Bill McEntee, our Governance Officer, at bill.mcentee@cliftondiocese.com or on 07710 094976.

"Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. "(Matthew 5:16)

Thank you for taking the time to read this invitation. I ask you to prayerfully consider this important ministry. Your 'yes' could help secure the future of Catholic education in our Diocese.

With my prayers and best wishes,

+ Bosco

Rt Rev Bosco MacDonald
Bishop of Clifton