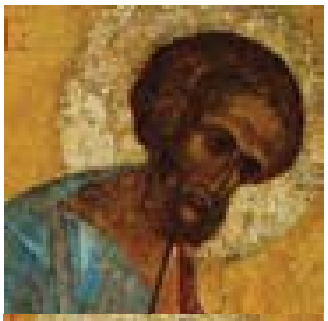
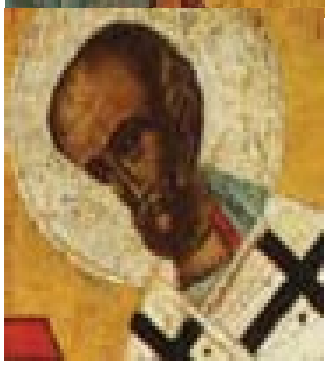
CLIFTON DIOCESE





A Guide for Clerks, Governance Professionals and Governance Leads in Clifton Diocese

September 2026

Contents

Section	Page
1. The Clifton Diocese Schools & Colleges Department	3
2. The Distinctive Nature of the Catholic School	4
3. What does a Governing Body look like?	5
4. What is the role of the Clerk?	8
5. The Foundation Governor Appointment Process	10
6. Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair of Governors	11
7. Governors Meetings	12
8. CCDEF/The Diocesan Academy Project Board	14
9. Schools & Colleges Committee	15
10. Insurance	15
11. Working in Partnership	15
12. Training and support	16
13. Useful Resources	17
Appendices:	18

1 - School Partnership Groups
2 - Acronyms in Education

Dear Clerk,

Welcome to our guide for those Clerking in Catholic education setting in the Diocese of Clifton. Whilst many of the duties of a clerk are the same as any other school, there are some significant differences and extra responsibilities for a clerk at a Catholic school(s). We have produced this booklet to outline these differences and responsibilities and to highlight some suggested areas of good practice.
We hope that this information is helpful. Please feel free to contact us if you have any queries.

Bill McEntee
Governance Officer

Definitions

Within this document:

i) the term '***Clerk(s)***', is taken to mean all clerks, governance professionals and governance leads

ii) the term '***Governor(s)***', is taken to mean any governor(s) of a VA maintained schools, or independent school and any director(s)(trustees) of any single academy trust or Multi Academy Trust (MAT).

iii) The term '***governing body***' is usually taken to mean any governing body, local governing committee and MAT Board of Directors.

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1. The Clifton Diocese Schools & Colleges Department

The Clifton Catholic Diocese covers the local authorities of Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, Gloucestershire, North Somerset, Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire.

As of September 2026, there are 52 primary schools, 7 secondary schools, 1 sixth form college, 2 special independent schools and 1 independent school across the Diocese. 11 of the schools have single academy status and there are 3 Multi Academy Trusts that currently include 26 of the schools. Wardour Primary School in Tisbury was founded by a charitable Order.

The Church sees schools as an important part of its mission. The Bishop of each diocese has extensive obligations and rights in relation to Catholic schooling in order to ensure the Catholic ethos and character of the schools within his diocese. The Bishop in this diocese, Bishop Bosco, carries out these obligations and rights through the Schools and Colleges Department.

The Schools and Colleges Department is responsible for offering training as well as providing oversight of and support to all of our schools regardless of status or phase. The Department also liaises with the Local Authorities (LA) across the diocese, the Regional Director, OfSTED and the Catholic Education Service (CES).

The Department is based in:
Alexander House, 160 Pennywell Road, Bristol, BS5 0TX Tel: 0117 9025599 and is made up of the following members:

Director of Schools and Colleges: **Mary Cox**	mary.cox@cliftondiocese.com
Religious Education Lead: **Louise White**	louise.white@cliftondiocese.com
Schools Partnership Officer: **Paul Kehoe**	paul.kehoe@cliftondiocese.com
Department Officer: **Jenny Fitzgerald**	jenny.fitzgerald@cliftondiocese.com
Governance Officer: **Bill McEntee**	bill.mcentee@cliftondiocese.com
Diocesan Schools Singing Programme / Junior Choir Director: **Alex Robinson**	alex.robinson@cliftondiocese.com

The Department aims to support the schools of the diocese through:

- providing quality information, training, advice and guidance to school staff and governors
- working with schools to develop policies and services
- maintaining effective working relationships with other dioceses, the CES and LAs
- helping schools to recruit and retain senior staff
- helping schools to monitor and develop their religious education provision
- supporting newly appointed Heads by induction and mentoring
- providing a "Catholic Schools Inspectorate" service
- encouraging productive collaboration between schools, parishes and the diocese
- appointing and training foundation governors.

2. The Distinctive Nature of a Catholic School

A school's Catholic character is witnessed in all facets of its life and there is no separation into 'secular' and 'religious'. The experience of learning across all subjects is a search for God's truth in the whole of His creation. For the school to be truly Catholic, this vision must be shared by all concerned with its work.

At the heart of the Catholic school is the belief in the human person, called by God into being and offered the fullness of life. (*cf John 10:10*). The school community shares its belief in God, the creator of all, visible and incarnate in Christ, and in the Spirit, abiding in the school. Pope Benedict XVI, in his address to Teachers and Religious in 2010 said that the school should be "*first and foremost … a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth*."[1]

The task of education requires of Catholic schools, a sincere, ongoing engagement between faith and learning, including a critique of what is taught, a synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life; the first is reached by integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel; the second in the growth of the virtues, characteristic of the Christian.'[2]

Evaluating the Distinctive Nature of the Catholic School

Foundation governors are charged with the responsibility of preserving and developing the religious character of the school on behalf of the Bishop, but all governors share in this responsibility because it is the ethos of the school. All have a duty to act in a way consistent with the school's ethos and religious character.

Governors should work with the Headteacher, staff, pupils and parents in ensuring that their policies reflect this. Admissions, behaviour, sex and relationship education, curriculum and personnel matters are areas which require particular consideration. The school's mission should be expressed in a statement of aims and objectives that makes clear to all in the school community how the school will live out its mission on a daily basis.

At Catholic schools, the governing body (or trust board at an academy) and not the LA, is responsible for the allocation of places at the school(s).

[1] Pope Benedict XVI, *Address to Teachers and Religious*, Twickenham, 17 September 2010
[2] Congregation for Catholic Education *The Catholic School, Congregation for Catholic Education*, Rome 1977, n.37

The Common Good in Education

Governing bodies should bear in mind the Church's social teaching as set out in The *Common Good in Education* (CES 1997). They should pay particular attention to their responsibility of commitment towards those who are poor and marginalised, disadvantaged and/or who have special educational needs and disabilities.

It is crucial for all in schools to ensure that those who do not succeed academically are valued by the community as a whole, to celebrate the fact that those who have not achieved high grades may well have tried as hard – if not harder – than those who have (*The Common Good in Education).*

Governor Code of Conduct

Governors should adopt a code of conduct which sets out the purpose of their governing body and describes the appropriate relationship between the individual governors, the whole governing body and the leadership team of the school or academy/academies.

The CES has published *a "model Code of Conduct"* Code-of-Conduct for all governing bodies, local governing committees (often called local governing bodies) and boards of directors.

The CES model Code of Conduct should be read and understood and thoroughly discussed so that the whole governing body has ownership of it, and, once it has been adopted, the governors should be asked to sign it. Clerks are advised to ensure that this is done on an annual basis, ideally at the beginning of the first meeting in the autumn term. Any alternative to the CES Codes should **not** be used in order to ensure the Catholic objectives are upheld. Schools should also have clear policies and protocols for when a governor visits a school.

3. What does a Governing Body look like?

The composition of a governing body is set out in a school's relevant constitutional documents. At Voluntary Aided (VA) maintained schools (but not at academies), governing bodies are established and constituted under their 'Instrument of Government'. For schools that are a single academy, governing bodies are established and constituted under their 'Articles of Association'. For schools that are part of a MAT, LGCs are established and constituted under their 'Scheme of Delegation' with the MAT having a board of directors, established and constituted under its 'Articles of Association'.

Instrument of Government (VA maintained schools only)

The Instrument of Government specifies that the school is to be conducted as a Catholic school in accordance with canon law, the teachings of the Church and its Trust Deed and it sets out how the governing body is constituted and establishes it as a corporate body. The vast majority of our schools have a constitution that has a total of 12 governors, seven of which are Foundation Governors. This is the minimum legally permitted size.

Articles of Association (academies only)

These also confirm that the school(s) will be conducted in accordance with the principles, practices and tenets of the Catholic Church and canon law and show how the governing body is to be constituted. In addition, the Articles set out the operational procedures of the school and governing body and must be posted on the school website. Our single academies have constitutions that have a total number of governors between 12 and 18, with between seven and ten foundation governors.

Scheme of Delegation (academies within a MAT only)

Academies within a MAT do not have an actual governing body but have a Local Governing Committee (LGC). How the LGC is constituted, is set out in its Scheme of Delegation, that also details what functions the Committee is responsible for. All our LGCs have a constitution that has ten governors, six of which are foundation governors.

Categories of governors

There are various types of governors, these are:

- foundation;
- parent;
- staff;
- local authority (VA maintained schools only)
- Headteacher/Principal.
- co-opted (only if specified in Instrument of Government or Articles of Association or Scheme of Delegation)
- those appointed under Article 51 (single academies only).

The precise composition of a school's governing body will vary from one school to another. The term of office for all governors is four years, although they can resign at any time.

MATs have a Board of Directors (rather than a 'governing body'), and the Diocese usually refers to the board members as 'Directors'. All the Directors appointed of our MATs are Foundation Directors, so there are no other categories on the boards.

Foundation Governors

For Catholic schools, foundation governors are appointed by the Bishop (and/or the Religious or Charitable Order if they are in the trusteeship of one). Whilst all governors must ensure that the school preserves its particular religious character and that it is conducted in accordance with the terms of the school's trust deed, foundation governors have particular responsibility for this. The Bishop requires foundation governors to be practising Catholics.

Foundation governors will usually only be appointed to the same governing body for a maximum of three terms of office, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Please contact Bill McEntee via bill.mcentee@cliftondiocese.com should you have any governors approaching the end of their third term.

In order to ensure that the Catholic ethos of the school is preserved, foundation governor posts must outnumber the sum total of all the other categories of governor posts by two (except for St Brendan's Sixth Form College where they must outnumber the sum total of all the other categories of governor posts by three). This is a legal requirement and is reflected in the governing body structure included in the Instrument of Government of all our VA maintained schools and in the Articles of Association or Scheme of Delegation of our academies. For example, a governing body comprising of twelve governors, will include seven foundation governor posts and a total of five governor posts from all the other categories combined. If all the foundation posts are not filled, the other governor category posts should still be filled (if possible) – even if that would mean that foundation governors were not in a majority of two (three at St Brendan's).

Foundation governors have particular responsibilities, and are required to ensure:

i) that the religious character of the school is preserved and developed;
ii) that the school is conducted in accordance with its Trust Deed;
iii) that the religious education and the sex and relationship education curriculum is in accordance with the Bishop's policy for the Diocese;
iv) all the Bishop's directives are implemented.

It is therefore important for foundation governors to:

i) know and implement the Bishop's policies on education;
ii) understand and promote the distinctive nature of Catholic education;
iii) secure the long-term future of Catholic education.

Foundation governors agree to ensure that the following key duties are carried out:

i) appointing practising Catholics to the Reserved Posts of Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Executive Head, Headteacher/Principal, Head of School, Deputy Headteacher, Assistant Head (if one of the two most senior posts at the school), Head of Religious Education, Chaplain, in order to promote and maintain the Catholic ethos of the school.
*NB schools **must** use CES model contracts for all posts - see* Employment guidance for details.
ii) admitting children in accordance with the aims of the Diocesan Trust Deed (as interpreted by the Bishop) by giving priority to Catholic children;
iii) ensuring that the whole curriculum, including religious education, "is taught in the light of gospel values and actively promotes the spiritual and moral development of the pupils"; and
iv) attending appropriate governor training in order to keep abreast of developments that are in line with national, diocesan and school priorities.

Further helpful information about the role of the foundation governor, is provided in our 'A Guide for Foundation Governors and Directors' – please visit https://schools.cliftondiocese.com/governance under the 'Diocesan Guidance' heading.

Parent Governors

Parent governors are elected* by parents of children at the school and must have a child attending the school at the time of appointment (although for academies, parents of former pupils or parents of a school aged child, may serve depending on the criteria specified within the Articles of Association or Scheme of Delegation). They are required to provide a 'parents view' to the governing body – they are not representatives of the interests of parents of pupils currently attending the school. A parent governor can continue to serve as a governor until the end of their four-year term of office, even if their child leaves the school during this period.
**If only one parent applies for a Parent Governor post, he/she may be appointed by the governing body, without the need for an election.*

Staff Governors

Staff governors are teachers or other members of staff and are elected by the staff at the school. They are required to provide a 'staff view' to the governing body – they are not representatives of the interests of staff. Staff governors cannot become chair or vice-chair of the governing body or chair of a committee.

Local Authority Governors (VA maintained schools only)

LA governors are nominated by the LA the school is situated within but are appointed by the governing body. The LA can nominate any eligible person as an LA governor, but it is for the governing body to decide whether their nominee has the skills to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school and meets any other eligibility criteria they have set.

Co-opted Governors

These are governors who are co-opted on to the Governing Body because of their specific skills but may only be appointed if specified within the schools Instrument of Government or an academy's Articles of Association or Scheme of Delegation. They have full voting rights.

Headteacher Governor

The Headteacher governor post is 'ex-officio' so a Headteacher* will be a full member of the governing body of their school, unless he/she chooses to exercise their right not to be a governor (although this very rarely occurs). If a Headteacher decides not to be a governor, he/she will still be required to attend all meetings of the governing body to present information but would not have any voting rights. The special position of the Headteacher governor is important for a good relationship is to be maintained between the head and the governing body.
**At some schools the Headteacher is called a 'Principal'.*

Governors appointed under Article 51 (single academy trusts schools only)

The governing body may appoint the number of governors specified in Article 51 of their Articles of Association but only if the foundation governors will be in a majority of two, at the time of appointment.

Additional Governor

Additional governors may be appointed, in specific circumstances, for example if a school Ofsted rating has significantly dropped or the school is deemed to be in a vulnerable position. For academies they would be appointed by the Secretary of State for Education. Contact the Diocese for further information.

Associate Member at VA maintained schools only

Associate members are **not** governors. They may be appointed by the governing body for a specific period to assist them because of particular skills/expertise they may have. They are appointed to serve on one or more committee of the governing body. They may also attend full governing body meetings but do not have a vote in governing body decisions. However, they may be given the right to vote on decisions made by committees to which they are appointed.

Advisor

VA maintained schools and academies can appoint advisors to provide them with advice in particular area(s). They are not governors and cannot vote at any level.

Trustees (academies only)

As an Academy Trust is both a company and a charity, governors at academies are both 'directors' and charitable 'trustees' and they therefore need to comply with obligations under

company and charitable law. The DfE often refer to them as 'Trustees' but this should not be confused with the Trustees of the Diocese.

4. What is the role of the clerk?

Specifically, as clerk, you have an important part to play in making sure that the governing body's work is well organised. In recognition of the importance of the role of the clerk, as stated earlier, they are often called the 'governance professional or lead', particularly at academies, where they also sometimes perform the role of Company Secretary. The clerk offers advice to the governing body, particularly on matters involving the law and procedures to be followed at meetings. In some schools the role of the clerk is undertaken by the school secretary, administrator, bursar or other member of the school staff, whilst in others the clerk may be independent of the school. Where the clerk is a member of staff, it is important to note to avoid any conflicts of interests, that whilst the Headteacher is the line manager for school staff, the chair of governors is the line manager for the clerk. Such clerks should have a separate email account from the one used as a member of staff.

The purpose of the clerk's role is to:

- Provide advice to the governing body on governance, constitutional and procedural matters.
- Provide effective administrative support to the governing body and/or its committees.
- Ensure the governing body is properly constituted.
- Manage information effectively in accordance with legal requirements.
- Liaise with the Diocese regarding the appointment of foundation governors.
- Be responsible for producing the minutes of the full governing body meetings.

The clerk is the 'constitutional conscience' of the governing body, and s/he should be accountable to the governing body. It is therefore important that there is a clear separation of functions and lines of reporting. The main responsibility for managing the relationship between the clerk and the governing body should rest with the chair of governors. Governing bodies need to make sure that the clerk receives adequate remuneration, is annually appraised, and receives appropriate training/support.

Clerks are required to keep a record of all training undertaken by themselves and governors.

As stated above, the positions of CEO, Executive Head, Head Teacher, Head of school, Deputy-Head, Assistant Head (only if one of the two most senior posts at the school), Head of RE, or Chaplain are 'Reserved Posts' that **must** be filled by practising Catholics. If any of the people in these posts resigns, the clerk must ensure that the diocese is informed and is involved in all stages of the recruitment process.

Clerks should be aware of some of the funding available to Catholic schools. This includes:

i) Devolved Formula Capital (DFC)
DFC is a formula-based grant that is available to all maintained schools paid directly to the school from the DfE. It can be rolled forward, but it must be spent within three years of allocation. DFC can support all types of capital work as long as it is a governing body responsibility. There is a minimum project cost of £2,000 but no maximum project cost.

ii) Schools Condition Allocations (SCA)
This is formulaic funding which is administered by the Diocese and is allocated to facilitate maintenance and improve the condition of school buildings and grounds e.g. poor building condition, building compliance, energy efficiency and health and safety issues. There is a

minimum project cost of £2,000 but no maximum project cost. The grant is normally paid up to 90% of the project value with a 5% School contribution and a 5% Diocesan contribution. The school contribution cannot be used from DFC. Historically schools also contributed DFC towards SCA projects, but this requirement has been removed. The project value should include VAT and professional fees, if required. SCA funding should normally be spent in the year it is allocated. If a consultant is used, then a consultant appointment document must be used to form the contract between the school and the consultant. There is a standard template and the consultant completes it.

iii) The Condition Improvement Fund (CIF)
This is an annual bidding round for eligible academies, sixth-form colleges to apply for capital funding. The priority for the fund is to address significant condition need, keeping education provider buildings safe and in good working order. This includes funding projects to address health and safety issues, building compliance and poor building condition.

CIF also supports a small proportion of expansion projects. These are for academies, sixth-form colleges and some VA schools rated Exceptional or Strong standard, by Ofsted that can demonstrate a need to expand. For further information visit: Condition Improvement Fund - GOV.UK
For an overview of school capital funding, who it's for, current and past allocations, how it's calculated and spending guidance visit: School capital funding - GOV.UK
For further information visit https://www.gov.uk/guidance/condition-improvement-fund#overview
For an overview of school capital funding, who it's for, current and past allocations, how it's calculated, and spending guidance visit https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-capital-funding

Where governors are planning a capital building project, the clerk **must** ensure that they seek the prior approval of the Diocese by contacting the diocesan Property Services Department https://cliftondiocese.com/departments/property-services/
***Note**: When multi academy trusts reach a certain size, they will be eligible for SCA, and as per current DfE rules will be administered by the MAT.*

Newsletters

The Diocese mainly communicates with governors and clerks via its regular newsletters. These must be distributed to all governors (including Heads/CEOs) and included on the agenda of governor meetings. Visit https://schools.cliftondiocese.com/governance under the 'Go-Governance Newsletters' heading, to see past editions of the Go-Governance newsletter.

5. The Foundation Governor/Director Appointment Process

There are different nomination forms for candidates to complete to apply to be a foundation governor /director that clerks need to be aware of:

- **New** Nomination form Nomination Form for the Appointment of a New Foundation Governor – for those applying to join a governing body of a school or single academy trust or local governing committee for the first time

- **Renewing** Governor Nomination form Renewing Foundation Governor Nomination Form for another term of office – for those applying for another term of office on the same governing body of a school or single academy trust or local governing committee

- **Clergy** Nomination form Clergy Nomination Form for the appointment of a Foundation Governor/Director – for Priests and Deacons (for either 'new' or 'renewing governor' appointments) for any school/academy

- **MAT Director** Nomination form Nomination Form for the Appointment of a New Foundation Director at a Multi Academy Trust - for those applying to join a MAT board of directors for the first time

- **Renewing MAT Director** Nomination form - Renewing Academy Trust Foundation Director Nomination Form for another term of office - for those applying for another term of office on the same board of directors.

For any renewing foundation governor/director who has **not** been reappointed for another term of office before their current term of office has expired, clerks must ensure that they do not take part in any governor/director activities, nor attend any meetings, until they receive confirmation that the Bishop has reappointed them.

For **schools** - whenever a new governor (of any category, including the Headteacher and any Associate Members, where applicable) is appointed, it is a legal requirement that you issue them with a copy of the school's Instrument of Government.

For **academies** – whenever a new governor/director (of any category, including the Headteacher and any Committee Member) is appointed, you should issue them with a copy of the trust's 'Articles of Association' and/or 'Scheme of Delegation' as appropriate. Each new governor/director must complete a form of 'Undertaking' to confirm they will, as stated in clause 4 of the Articles of Association, uphold the Object of the Academy Trust, which is:

> *"to advance for the public benefit education in the United Kingdom, in particular but without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing by establishing, maintaining, carrying on, managing and developing [a] Catholic school[s] designated as such ("the [Academy]") which shall offer a broad and balanced curriculum and shall be conducted in accordance with the principles, practices and tenets of the Catholic Church and all Catholic canon law applying thereto including any trust deed governing the use of land used by the Academy both generally and in particular in relation to arranging for religious education and daily acts of worship and having regard to any advice and following directives issued by the Diocesan Bishop."*

For an Undertaking form for your trust, please contact Bill McEntee, Governance Officer, via bill.mcentee@cliftondiocese.com

All governor/director appointments are subject to a satisfactory Enhanced Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) certificate being issued and also a satisfactory Section 128 clearance check. It is not usually the responsibility of the clerk to undertake these checks. However, it is part of the clerk's role to ensure that a governing body is legally compliant in this regard and so must have an up-to-date record of the DBS and 128 statuses of all governors/directors. As the Bishop is ultimately legally responsible for ensuring DBS governor/director compliance, for every foundation appointment, we require clerks to confirm that DBS and 128 clearances have been approved, before an appointment is made. Clerks must **not** let foundation governors start their term of office, unless the Diocese has confirmed that they may do so. Clerks must liaise with whoever undertakes the DBS and 128 checks at the school/trust to ensure that there is no delay in the Diocese being informed when clearance has been confirmed. Please see the DBS Protocol DBS-Protocol-for-Foundation-Governors-Directors-April-2024.pdf for full details

As clerk, you must ensure that whenever a foundation governor/director resigns before the end of their term of office, that you (not the governor/director) complete a Resignation form Resignation-Form-2026.doc and submit it to Bill McEntee

6. Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair of Governors

The Members Agreement of our single **academies**, and the Scheme of Delegation for academies that are part of a MAT, requires that governors appoint the chair and vice-chair from amongst the **foundation** governors**.** The Articles of Association or Scheme of Delegation respectively, require that this happens at the first meeting of the governing body in each academic year.
Governing bodies for VA maintained schools, may elect a chair and vice-chair from any governor category, except from Staff or Headteacher. Unless specified in their own arrangements, it is not compulsory for our VA maintained **schools** to elect governors to these posts annually, but it is good practice to do so.

The chair plays a pivotal role in the effectiveness of the governing body. This will include meeting regularly with the Headteacher. The chair leads the governing body but does not have any power to act on the governing body's behalf without instructions, except in certain cases of urgency, known as 'Chair's Action'. It is important that the chair develops a good working relationship with the clerk, and they should hold regular meetings.

It is the clerk's responsibility to make sure that elections for the positions of chair and vice-chair are compliant with the school's agreed arrangements. Whenever there is a change of chair of governors, you must inform the Diocese immediately, so that our records are up to date and that correspondence is sent to the correct person.

For new chairs of a **single** academy only, it is a legal requirement that they also complete a 'Deed of Adherence' form to confirm that they will comply with the original 'Members Agreement' that was signed by the chair who was in post at the time when the school became an academy. For a Deed of Adherence form, contact Bill McEntee, via bill.mcentee@cliftondiocese.com

7. Governor Meetings

Meetings of the governors will be attended by the clerk. Broadly, the clerk convenes the governing body meetings and keeps a record of the important matters discussed and decisions taken during the meeting (the "minutes"). Minutes will be examined by OfSTED, so it is vital that accurate minutes are kept. The clerk ensures that each governor receives proper notice of forthcoming meetings and makes sure that the work of the governing body is well organised, as well as maintaining a register of governors.

To help ensure confidentiality and avoid any breaches of General Data Protection Regulations, clerks and governors must **not** use personal or work email accounts. Only school-based (or trust-based) email accounts should be used. Any documents containing confidential or sensitive information, must be sent securely, for example, encrypted with a password.

Clerks must ensure that, in line with legislation, only those actually present at a meeting vote on any issue. Being 'actually present' can include video or telephone conferencing (if agreed by the governing body), but an exchange of emails is **not** valid.

The clerk is not a governor of the school and is **not** eligible either to participate directly in a debate or to vote. Usually, the cost of the clerk is met from the school's budget.

Meetings and Agendas

- It is expected that meetings will begin and end with a prayer.
- It is a legal requirement that a full meeting of the governing body **must** be held at least three times per year (usually once per term).
- Any member of the governing body may ask the chair to place an item on the agenda (provided adequate notice is given).
- The notice of the meeting should include an agenda, draft minutes of the last meeting, any reports and any other papers to be considered and should be distributed (securely) at least seven days before the meeting.

Attendance at Meetings

Governors needing to offer apologies for a meeting, should provide these to the clerk (or chair) in advance of the meeting, along with the reason for their absence (and these reasons should be noted). Apologies should **not** be automatically accepted. Unless the reasons for non-attendance are confidential, they should be considered by those at the meeting, who must decide if they will accept the apologies or not. This is important because under legislation, constant failure to attend meetings without the approval of governors, can lead to a governor being removed from the governing body – but this would not be permitted if the reasons for absence were not considered and the apologies were automatically accepted. If no apologies are offered, then that is usually considered as being absent without the consent of the governing body. Attendance and absence data is looked at by OfSTED to help assess effective governance, so it is vital that accurate records are maintained.

The quorum for a meeting of the governing body is one half (rounded up to a whole number) of the governing body membership, excluding any vacancies. The quorum for any committee meeting and for any vote must be three governors who are members of the committee, or more, as determined by the committee.

The Employment Rights Act 1996 gives employees the right to have time off to perform official duties, as long as 'time off' is reasonable in the particular circumstances. If a governor is in employment, they should clarify with their employer the conditions for releasing employees from work and whether this would be with or without pay.

Confidentiality

Governing body meetings are not open to the public. Visitors may attend as an observer by invitation of the governing body but must not take part in the meeting and must be asked to leave if a confidential item is discussed.
It is the chair's role to manage the confidentiality of the work of the governors where this is appropriate. The minutes of any part of the meeting that are confidential should be kept separate

from the rest of the minutes. In the main, confidential items will be those where the privacy of an individual needs to be respected.
The governing body must ensure that the agenda, approved draft minutes, signed minutes of meetings and any report or paper considered, should be available for inspection at the school by any interested person. However, any item deemed confidential by the governing body, or items relating to a named pupil or member of staff must not be included. Minutes are usually in two parts and the confidential items are in the second part.

When in a meeting the confidential part of the agenda is reached, all non-governors apart from the clerk, should be asked to leave the meeting (as determined by the governing body). It is important however, to note that even the confidential part of the minutes must be made available if requested under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, although information will have to be blanked out to meet requirements in the Data Protection Act, as appropriate.

Committees

Most governing bodies operate with Committees. Generally, there are two types of committees – firstly working committees dealing with matters such as finance, personnel, curriculum etc. - and secondly, statutory/standing committees that only meet when required relating to matters such as staff discipline and appeals, pupil discipline and complaints. It is only compulsory for the statutory committees to have an appointed clerk. A governing body may, however, appoint a clerk to any other committee established by it if they wish. Even if a clerk is not appointed, an accurate record of the meeting should still be made.
Some governing bodies do not establish committees, and so the full governing body meet more frequently to consider all governor matters (often referred to as 'Circle Governance').

Admissions

- It's a legal requirement that all applications are not dealt with by just one person but are considered by the full governing body or a committee of it.

NB Only governors, not staff, should be on the Committee. Heads can be on the Committee (and we recommend that they are), but it is strongly recommended that Staff Governors and Clergy are not, as it can cause a conflict of interests.

- Governors are responsible for admissions and must not delegate the decision to offer or refuse places and/or the task of ranking applications to a member of staff or the LA, although, for new intake applications the LA will inform the parents on behalf of the governors of their decision.
- Governors **must** meet in person (or virtually if not possible) to consider **all** applications and the reasons provided by applicants, otherwise it may cause maladministration.

- Applications must **not** be automatically refused if a year group and/or class is full. Governors must only refuse admission if they consider that the child's admission would *'cause prejudice to the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources' (and additionally for infant class size cases, 'by the school having to take Relevant Measures, such as employing an additional teacher to keep a ratio of one teacher per 30 pupils)* – if not, a place should be offered.
- The School Admissions Code requires that schools must publish on the school website by 31 August every year, how In-Year admission applications will be processed.

- The reasons for offering or refusing admission must always be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. The minutes may be required by an appeals panel.

- The School Admissions Code requires that schools should aim to respond in writing to an In-Year application within 10 school days and **must** do so within 15 school days.

- In the event of a refusal of a place, parents, (and in some circumstances, children), have the right to appeal against the governor's decision. When informing the applicant of the refusal, the governing body must set out the reasons for the decision, that there is a right of appeal and the process for making such appeals.

8. Clifton Catholic Diocesan Education Foundation (CCDEF)/Diocesan Academy Project Board

CCDEF is a company established by the Diocesan Trustees in response to the establishment of single academies in 2011 and its aim is to protect the Bishop's canonical rights. The directors of CCDEF are also members of the Diocesan Academy Project Board. The prime responsibility of the Board is to oversee the implementation of the Diocesan strategy of the ongoing growth and development of the three Diocesan Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) and to hold all Diocesan academies to account, whether as a single academy or under the multi-academy structure. All applications for school academisation conversion, must be submitted to and approved by this Board. The Board is chaired by the Bishop and its membership comprises of:

- Bishop Bosco MacDonald (Chair)
- Ann-Marie Wykes – Educational Trustee
- Nicholas Morrell - Educational Trustee
- Lyn Murray - Chief Operating Officer
- Mary Cox - Director of Schools and Colleges
- Paul Kehoe – School Partnership Officer
- Catherine Hobbs – Independent panel member (Director of Schools, Diocese of Portsmouth).

9. Schools & Colleges Committee

This is a committee that has been set up to assist the Schools and Colleges Department in fulfilling its role. It enables its stakeholders' mainly the Diocesan schools & colleges, to contribute to and critique the Department. The Bishop is the Chair of the Committee and it has representatives from all school sectors including primary, secondary, sixth form, special and independent, along with the Bishop's representative for education and for governance. It also includes the Diocesan Educational Trustees. The Director of Schools and Colleges, Religious Education Lead, Schools Partnership Officer and Governance Officer also sit on the Committee, with the Chief Operating Officer in attendance as and when required.

10. Insurance

- **VA maintained schools**

Buildings and liability insurance for the school and staff is to be sought by the school. Many schools buy this service from their Local Authority. However, cover is also available under a VA Schools Property Insurance Scheme which is operated by the Catholic Insurance Service Ltd. The insurance should be in the joint names of the school and the Clifton Diocese. Governors should also purchase Governors' indemnity insurance. This may be available through the Local Authority, or you may have to purchase it separately through another service provider. Schools must ensure that their insurance includes legal cover that provides support with employment tribunals. Governors are reminded to use 'Churchmarketplace' where possible
https://www.churchmarketplace.org.uk/

- **Academies**

Academies must take out building insurance and the insurance should be in the joint names of the Academy and the Clifton Diocese. Academies must take out Public Liability insurances. Academies can arrange their liability policies through the Government Scheme, by opting into the Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA). The payment for this will be deducted from the GAG funding monthly. In purchasing the liability insurances, academies are responsible for ensuring that they comply with the relevant procurement requirements. Funding for academy insurance will form part of the general annual grant (GAG).

11. Working in Partnership

The 63 schools and colleges of the Diocese are divided into seven school partnership groups, with between seven to eleven schools within each group. Every school has signed a Memorandum of Agreement to work collaboratively with the other schools within their partnership group. This applies to staff, governors and clerks. The partnership groups represent all the different geographical areas of the Diocese. They include heads and governor representatives (normally the chair), and all phases of schools from all the Catholic schools and colleges (of whatever type) within the designated partnership.

The partnership model was created to enhance the collaborative work being undertaken by schools to help and support each other. The partnerships have been in place for a number of years and are the basis on which future plans for Clifton Diocese are based as we move forward to closer collaboration and partnership including Hard Federation, and the formation of Multi Academy Trusts. Bishop Bosco's intention is for all (non-independent) schools to be in one of three Catholic multi academy trusts within the diocese, by September 2028.

The Clerk to Governors post is a unique one within every school and so clerks can feel isolated. We recommend that clerks establish contact with their fellow partnership clerks, to create a network of supportive working relationships, the sharing of experience and good practice. This is an effective way for clerks to support each other in their important roles.

Schools, in conjunction with other partnership schools, may wish to convert to academy status and join a MAT. A school can only do so with the agreement of the Diocesan Trustees, so the Diocese must be informed when the joining of a MAT is being planned. The point of contact is Paul Kehoe, School Partnership Officer paul.kehoe@cliftondiocese.com

The seven partnership groups and the schools included within each of them, are included in the Appendix below.

12. Training and support

The Department for Schools and Colleges annual training programme for governors, clerks and teachers is published in our CPD Booklet of Courses for 2026-27 CPD-Booklet-2026-27 and ensure that governors are aware of the booklet.

It is an expectation that all clerks and governors undertake regular training, provided by both the Diocese and other providers, such as Local Authorities. To support clerks in their important role, the Diocese provides a training session, that covers the requirements of clerking at a Catholic school(s). All our clerks are expected to attend this session every three years. Please see page 28 of 2026-27 CPD Booklet of Courses for full details.

13. Useful Resources

The **Catholic Education Service** website http://catholiceducation.org.uk/ is a valuable resource for schools, as it includes employment contracts, Codes of Conduct, Self-Evaluation forms, guidance etc.
The **Diocesan Schools and Colleges** own website has various legal documents and guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE) and the Diocese, as well as links to application forms, newsletters etc. visit https://schools.cliftondiocese.com/governance
The **Ask a Clerk** website is a very useful problem-solving tool, visit
https://askaclerk.co.uk/can-we-hold-a-vote-of-no-confidence-in-school-governors/
Listed below are some important guidance documents:

1) **The constitution of governing bodies of maintained schools** The constitution of governing bodies of maintained schools (cliftondiocese.com) - this statutory guidance is for maintained schools but is also useful for academies. Issued by the DfE in 2017.

2) **Maintained schools' governance guide and Academy trust governance guide**

- https://www.gov.uk/guidance/governance-in-maintained-schools
- https://www.gov.uk/guidance/-governance-in-academy-trusts

Both guides were issued by the DfE in 2024.

3) **Working with governance professionals (clerks):**
Working with governance professionals (clerks): resources - GOV.UK - updated by the DfE in 2025.

4) **The School Governance (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) (England) Regulations** Advice template - issued by the DfE in 2014 for maintained schools, but also useful for academies.

5) **Diocesan Guidance on School Admissions** issued annually by the Schools and Colleges Department, visit https://schools.cliftondiocese.com/governance under the '**Admissions**' heading. You will find one guide for primary schools and a separate guide for secondary schools.

6) **School Admissions Code**
School admissions code 2021 – issued by the DfE in 2021.

7) **School Admissions Appeals Code** School Admission Appeals Code – issued by the DfE in 2022.

8) **A Clerking Handbook** NAGAS-Clerking-and-Governance-Professional-Handbook-2026.pdf - issued by National Association of Governance Advisory Services in 2026.

10) **Academy Trust Handbook**
Academy trust handbook 2026: effective from 1 October 2026 - GOV.UK

Appendices

School Partnership Groups

Appendix 1

Emmaus

St Augustine's College, Trowbridge
St Joseph's Secondary, Salisbury
St Edmund's, Calne**
St John's, Trowbridge
St Joseph's, Devizes
St. Louis, Frome**
St. George's, Warminster
St Osmund's, Salisbury
Christ The King, Amesbury**
Wardour, Tisbury
St Edward's, Romsey (Special)

Little Way

St Peter's High & Sixth Form, Gloucester
St Peter's, Gloucester***
The Rosary, Stroud***
St Joseph's, Nympsfield***
St Gregory the Great, Cheltenham***
St Thomas More, Cheltenham***
St Marys, Churchdown
St Catharine's, Chipping Camden***
St Rose's, Stroud (Special)

Aquinas

St Brendan's Sixth Form College, Bristol
St Bernadette's Secondary, Bristol
St Bernadette's, Bristol
Christ the King, Bristol
Holy Cross, Bristol
St Joseph's, Bristol
St Patrick's, Bristol*
St Nicholas of Tolentine, Bristol*

Newman

St Bede's College, Bristol
St Bernard's, Bristol*
Our Lady of the Rosary, Bristol
SS Peter and Paul, Bristol
St Bonaventure's, Bristol*
St Teresa's, Bristol*
St Mary's, Bradley Stoke
Holy Family, Patchway
Christ the King, Thornbury
St Francis, Nailsea*
St Joseph's, Portishead*

Camino

St Gregory's College, Bath
St John's, Bath**
St Mary's, Bath**
St Benedict's, Midsomer Norton**
St Patrick's, Corsham
St Mary's, Chippenham**
St Augustine of Canterbury, Downend
Our Lady of Lourdes, Kingswood
St Paul's, Yate
Downside, Stratton-on-the-Fosse (Independent)

Dunstan

Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Wincanton**
St Gildas, Yeovil**
St George's, Taunton
St Joseph's, Bridgwater**
Corpus Christi, Weston-super-Mare**
St Joseph and St Teresa, Wells**
St Joseph's, Burnham-on-Sea**

Samuel

St Joseph's College, Swindon
Holy Cross, Swindon
Holy Rood, Swindon
Holy Family, Swindon
St Mary's, Swindon
St Catherine's, Swindon
St Joseph's, Malmesbury.

**School is part of the Cardinal Newman Catholic Educational Trust*
***School is part of the Dunstan Catholic Educational Trust*
****School is part of the Little Way Catholic Educational Trust*

Appendix 2

Acronyms in Education

ADHD.	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder A condition that has symptoms including being restless and having difficulty concentrating.
AHT	Assistant Headteacher
ARF	Audit, Risk and Finance Committee. A Committee of the Trust Board that focuses on finance and risk management
ASC	Autistic Spectrum Condition
ASDAN	Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network. An education charity and awarding organisation providing courses, accredited curriculum programmes and regulated qualifications to engage, elevate and empower young people aged 11 to 25 years with diverse needs.
BSL	British Sign Language.
BPN	Best Practice Network.
CAMHS	Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service.
CF	Cystic Fibrosis.
CASS	Children's Advice and Support Service. A single point of contact for professionals and members of the public who want to access support or raise concerns about a child.
CiN	Child in Need A child is deemed to be 'in need': if he or she is unlikely, or does not have the opportunity, to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development without provision made by the local authority; or if his or her health and development are likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision of services by the local authority; or if he or she is disabled (Section 17(10), Children Act 1989).

CME	Children Missing in Education
COP	Code of Practice: A guide for schools and LAs on the practical help they should offer children with SEN. The code must be considered when making any decisions about a child's education.
CP	Child Protection.
CPD	Continuing professional development for school staff or those involved in governance
CPOMS	Child Protection Online Monitoring System. The system used by schools to record and monitor child protection, safeguarding and pastoral and welfare issues.
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
DA	Domestic Abuse
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service: An executive non-departmental public body of the home office, it replaced the Independent Safeguarding Authority.
DCS	Director of Children Services (in a local Authority).
DFE	Department for Education
DHT	Deputy Headteacher
DSG	Dedicated Schools Grant. Funding paid by the ESFA to local authorities, which is the main source of pre-16 schools funding. It is allocated on a financial year basis, and has historically been divided into 4 blocks: • The schools block • The high needs block • The early years block • The central school services block
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ECF	Early Career Framework. A two-year package of structured training and support for ECTs.
ECT	Early Career Teacher (formerly NQT). ECTs are referred to as ECT1s (first year) or ECT2s (second year)
EDT	Education Development Trust
EEF	Education Endowment Foundation
EHCP	Education Health and Care Plan
ELG	Early Learning Goal(s). These outline expectations for children to reach by the end of Foundation Stage. They provide a basis for planning throughout the EYFS.
EYFS/ EYFSP	Early Years Foundation Stage/ Profile: Statutory framework for care and education of children from birth to five years of age. Profile is the assessment process.
FFT	Fischer Family Trust – a company that provides data and analyses to schools and LAs
FSM	Free School Meal.
FSW	Family Support Worker
FTE	Full-time Equivalent: An indication of the school's staffing, including full-time and part-time staff expressed in terms of full-time teaching posts: may apply, also, to full-time and part-time pupils, especially those in a nursery school or class.

GAG	General Annual Grant – the main source of revenue funding for Academy trusts
GCSE	General Certificate of Education. An academic qualification in a range of specific subjects, taken in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. GCSEs are typically taken by school students aged 14-16 and are at a level below A Level.
GIAS	Get Information About Schools. The DFE's register of educational establishments in England and Wales, which includes the National Database of Governors.
HI	Hearing Impaired
HLTA	Higher Level Teaching Assistant.
HMCI	His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools
HMI	His Majesty's Inspector
HOD/ HOY	Head of Department/Head of Year.
HT	Headteacher
HSE	Health and Safety Executive
ICFP	Integrated Curriculum Financial Planning. A management process that helps Trust and school leaders to plan the best curriculum for pupils with the funding they have.
IEP	Individual Education Plan – for pupils with special educational needs
INSET	In-Service Education and Training: Usually applied to training for members of staff.
ISR	Individual School Range: Used to calculate salaries of senior staff.
ITT	Initial Teacher Training. Training to become a teacher
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
KS	Key Stage: Description of syllabus for pupils at different stages of schooling: KS1 –pupils aged 5-7 KS2- pupils aged 7-11 KS3 – pupils aged 11-14 KS4 – pupils ages 14- 16 KS5 (Post 16) – pupils aged 18-18
LA	Local Authority.
LAC	Looked after children – children who are in care provision or have been at anytime in the last six year.
LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer. A key safeguarding post within children's services providing advice and guidance in all cases where there are allegations or concerns about abuse against children
LD	Learning Difficulty.
LSCB	Local Safeguarding Children Board
LTS	In relation to staff absence: Long Term Sickness In relation to staff roles in school: Lunchtime Supervisor
MARF	Multi-Agency Referral Form. A form to request services from the Local Authority's Early Help and Children's Social Care services.
MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub. A multi-agency team which involves key safeguarding agencies including professionals from social care, police, health and education. This enables the sharing of information between services so that risks to children can be identified at an early stage.
MAT	Multi-Academy Trust

MFL	Modern Foreign Languages.
MLD	Moderate Learning Difficulties
NASEN	National Association for Special Education Needs.
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NGA	National Governance Association
NPQ	National Professional Qualification(s). A suite of national qualifications for teachers and leaders – see below NPQEL National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership NPQEYL National Professional Qualification for Early Years Leadership NPQH National Professional Qualification for Headship NPQLBC National Professional Qualification for Leading Behaviour and Culture NPQLL National Professional Qualification for Leading Literacy NPQLPM National Professional Qualification for Leading Primary Mathematics NPQLT National Professional Qualification for Leading Teaching NPQLTD National Professional Qualification for Leading Teacher Development NPQSENCO National Professional Qualification for SENCOs NPQSL National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education: Coordinating body for the inspection of schools.
OT	Occupational Therapy/Occupational Therapist.
PA	Persistent Absence. Pupils who have missed more than 10% of school sessions are considered persistently absent
PAN	Published Admissions Number
PEEP	Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan
PEP	Personal Education Plan
PEx/PEX	Permanent Exclusion
PGCE	Post-Graduate Certificate of Education
PMLD	Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties
POG	Post-opening Grant. Free schools, studio schools and university technical colleges are provided with a POG to reflect the additional costs of establishing a new school
PPA	Planning, preparation and assessment – 10% guaranteed non-contact time for teachers
PSHE	Personal, Social and Health Education.
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
RD	Regional Director(s). Civil servants who work on behalf of the Secretary of State to provide oversight and scrutiny of Academy trusts' performance.
RPA	Risk Protection Arrangement – an alternative to commercial insurance for Academy trusts
RPI	Restrictive Physical Intervention
RRP	Risk Reduction Plan
RSE	Relationships and Sex Education
SALT	Speech and Language Therapist.
SAT	Single Academy Trust
SATs	Standardised Assessment Tests administered by primary schools in England to children in year 2 (optional) and year 6 to check their educational progress.

SCR	Single Central Record. Sometimes referred to as a Single Central Register. It is a statutory requirement for schools to keep an SCR, to maintain a record of pre-employment and pre-appointment checks carried out on all staff, volunteers and those contracted to work in the school. School in the Trust use an online system, called 'Sign In SCR' (previously 'SCR Tracker').
SEF	Self-Evaluation (Form) A form for schools to evaluate how they are performing with a summary of the evidence
SEMH	Social, Emotional and Mental Health
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SLCN	Speech, Language and Communication Needs
SLD	Severe Learning Difficulties
SLT	Senior Leadership Team.
SMSC	Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development in schools.
SRMA	School Resource Management Advisor
SRMSA	School Resource Management Self-assessment Checklist. A checklist for Academy Trusts to check that they are managing resources effectively, and identify any adjustments they need to make
STEM	Subjects Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
STPCD	School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document – an annually published document which forms a part of the contract of all teachers and headteachers in maintained schools in England and Wales
STRB	School Teachers' Review Body – makes recommendations to the secretary of state on teachers' pay
TA	Teaching Assistant
TLR	Teaching and learning responsibility – payments made to teachers for an additional responsibility
TSH	Teaching School Hub. Schools designated by the DFE to work with others to provide teacher training and CPD for staff
UIFSM	Universal Infant Free School Meals. Funding for schools to provide free school meals for all pupils in reception, year 1 and year 2.
UPN	Unique Pupil Number: Number allocated to each pupil, to track progress through the education system.
UPS	Upper Pay Scale (for teachers). Experienced, quality teachers who have reached the top of the main pay scale and fulfil the criteria set out in the schools pay policy can apply to move onto this higher pay scale
UQT	Unqualified Teacher
URN	Unique Reference Number of the school
VI	Visually Impaired
WRAP	Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent. A Home Office training package which aims to help frontline staff identify individuals who may e at risk of radicalisation and offers guidance on how to respond appropriately.