Department for Schools and Colleges

Go-Governance – our newsletter for Governors, Directors and Clerks

Issue 42 – September 2026

Introduction

Welcome to the first edition of Go-Governance of the 2026-27 school year. I hope you enjoyed the really hot summer and feel fully refreshed, ready for another school year!

1) Allen Yhearm RIP

I am sad to report of the death of Allen Yhearn, a Foundation Governor of St Louis Primary School in Frome. Allen suffered a catastrophic stroke and sadly died on 25 July. Whilst Allen was only appointed as a Foundation Governor at the school in October 2025, we are of course very grateful for his support of Catholic education. Please would you include Allen, his family and fellow governors in your prayers. May Allen rest in peace.

2) Education Sunday – 13 September

Education Sunday is celebrated in the Church annually on the second Sunday of September. To help schools and parishes celebrate the day, the Catholic Education Service (CES) has produced these resources 6a5103049f8cb432ee0f6762_Education Sunday 2026 FINAL.pdf including a wonderful statement, from Paul Barber, Director of the CES, reminding us of the history and value of Catholic education. I hope that your school & parish are able to celebrate the day.

3) New Appeal by Bishop Bosco – 13 September

As many of you will know from previous years, we always use Education Sunday to try to attract new volunteers, and this year is no exception. You may also recall that in May of last year Bishop Bosco, wrote a special letter appealing for new governors/directors, that was extremely successful. I am delighted to advise that the Bishop has written a new updated letter of appeal Bishop-Letter-2026.pdf to be attached to all parish newsletters on 13 September. Last year's appeal showed, that the letter is likely to have most impact if it is also read out at Churches at the end of Masses that weekend. Therefore, please would you and/or your colleagues from your governing body, consider reading it out at your parish and being available at the back of the Church afterwards; to answer any queries from enquirers (please ensure you arrange it with the Parish Priest beforehand). Just let me know if you would like some supporting promotional posters/leaflets.

The Bishop's appeal is really the most effective way we have of recruiting new governors/directors, so please do all you can to support it – thank you.

4) Education Mass – 13 September

Our annual Education Mass will also again be celebrated on Education Sunday. The Mass will be celebrated by Bishop Bosco at Ss Peter & Paul Cathedral, Clifton, Bristol, on Sunday 13 September at 6pm. As always, anyone involved in Catholic Education within the Diocese in any way is welcome. We hope many of you will be able to attend – it would be great to see you there!

5) Diocesan Protocols

Based on the CES model, we have updated our Diocesan Protocols Diocesan-Protocols-2026.pdf and so are now issuing them to **all** governors/directors of all schools and trusts. The protocols set out the principles for a committed working relationship between schools/academies and the Diocese, to underpin the effective running of schools/academies, and so are a very important document. Multi Academy Trusts must monitor and ensure compliance of them from schools within their trusts. This latest edition supersedes all previous editions. The protocols that particularly relate to Governance start on page 14.

6) Important Reminders

i) Non-attendance: I am aware that during the last school year, non-attendance at meetings has been an issue for some schools. For governing bodies to be most effective, regular attendance at meetings is essential. Attendance and absence data is looked at by OfSTED to help assess effective governance. Non-attendance should only be when extenuating circumstances arise that make it unavoidable. Absence from meetings directly compromises the quorum and diversity of input needed for effective governance. Also, decision making can be delayed as voting may not legally take place, and the workload can fall unfairly on those governors/directors who do attend. Regular attendance at meetings is therefore the responsibility of every governor/director. We do of course appreciate that our governors/directors are volunteers, often with family and work commitments, that occasionally mean that they are not able to attend a meeting and this is of course entirely acceptable.
So, other than when extenuating circumstances do arise, please would everyone make every effort to attend all meetings during the new school year.

ii) Timings: The times of the meetings should be regularly reviewed to try to ensure the maximum possible attendance. We realise that trying to hold meetings at times that are convenient for all members of the governing body and the clerk, can sometimes be very difficult but consideration should be given to times that would suit most members. Where meetings are held after school hours, please try to set times as early as possible, to avoid meetings that eat into the evening.

iii) Remote meetings: Please remember that governing body meetings should usually be held in person. Holding meetings remotely, via Teams, Zoom etc. should not be the norm but only used in exceptional circumstances, for example when a meeting needs to be convened at short notice or where the governors/directors all live some distance from the school.

7) New Resources

i) The Department for Education (DfE) has updated its Academy trust handbook: Academy trust handbook 2026: effective from 1 October 2026 - GOV.UK

ii) The DfE has also updated its governance guides, to help support you in your roles:

- Maintained schools Maintained schools: governance guide - GOV.UK,
- Academy Trusts Academy trusts: governance guide - GOV.UK

iii) We updated our Diocesan guide A Guide to Foundation Governors 2026 for Foundation **Governors/Directors** for the new school year, that all governors/directors of any category will find very helpful. Please do take time to read it.

iv) We have also updated our Diocesan guide for **Clerks/Governance Professionals/Leads** Microsoft Word - 2026 v1 that covers the main differences when Clerking at a Clifton Catholic school, compared to a secular one. It is essential reading for all our Clerks/Governance Professionals/Leads.

v) We are now able to issue our guides to school **admissions**, that took effect from 1 September 2026. There is one for our primary school admission authorities ADMISSIONS 2026 PRIMARY and one for our secondary schools, ADMISSION SECONDARY 2026 to help all schools comply with the School Admissions Code.

8) Chruchmarketplace

With school budgets always being so tight, please would all schools/trusts ensure that they are take advantage of the savings available using Churchmarketplace, which was created by the Church to enable the Catholic community to save costs by purchasing together. It is not just for Churches but for all our schools too. Schools can access great prices on a wide range of products and services, including computers, telecommunications, copiers, health & safety, energy, HR & legal services. Visit their website churchmarketplace.org.uk to see how they can save money for your school/trust.

9) Gigabit Broadband

The CES has asked us to advise schools that the DfE has published guidance on **Schools gigabit broadband**, a government-funded programme to ensure that all schools in England will be able to access a fibre connection, by the end of 2030. The DfE are currently working to identify appropriate schools and will from September 2006 begin contacting schools that meet DfE requirements. Please would all schools read the guidance, which can be accessed via: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/schools-gigabit-broadband

10) Change to Diocesan Training

Since September 2024, governors/directors & clerks have been required to reserve places at any of our training sessions by booking a place in advance via the EventBrite booking platform. However, we are **no longer** be using this system for our future training sessions. From now on, sessions will be via Microsoft Teams and so you will just need to click on the relevant link to be able to join a session. Pages 22-29 of our 2026-27 CPD Booklet of Courses CPD-Booklet-2026-27 have been updated to reflect this change, with the previous EventBrite link removed and the relevant Teams link now added next to each individual listed session. You will therefore **not** be required to book in advance, but it would be helpful if you would let me know whenever you intend to join a particular session. Please always join our sessions via your **school/trust** email account.

NB *This change only applies to training sessions for governors/directors & clerks - other training for teachers and other events etc. will still need to be booked via EventBrite, as indicated in the CPD Booklet.*

11) Forthcoming training sessions

Are you aware that when schools/trusts are inspected by the Catholic Schools Inspectorate, the inspectors check to see if all Foundation Governors are up to date with their Diocesan Induction/Refresher training? So, failure to be up to date i.e. have attended the Diocesan at least every 4 years, can adversely affect a school's grading. There are several Diocesan training sessions taking place in the autumn term, detailed below, just click on the link for any you wish to attend:

i) Admissions and Appeals - 1st October 2026 - 6:30pm – 8:00pm via Teams https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/320437704493310?p=D7YiCZ6Aqf9LokVm0b For any governor/director or school staff involved in admissions.

ii) Multi-Academy Trust Director (MAT) Induction - 8th October 2026 - 6.30pm – 8.30pm via Teams https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/397863950932756?p=3cxnQxvHON49kiyCp6 For any MAT director who has not yet undertaken it.

iii) Clerk to Governors, Governance Leads/Professionals - 15th October 2026 - 6.30pm – 8.30pm via Teams https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/351098006183541?p=kc3ztHXk07jcoMTAl6 For any Clerk Lead/Professional who has not yet undertaken it.

iv) Governor Refresher - 7th November 2026 - 10:00am – 11:30am via Teams https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/326461148426853?p=JStDhORX93DP2vnn3j For all experienced Governors

v) Governor Induction - 19th November 2026 - 6:30pm – 8:00pm via Teams https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/353986769918409?p=GPzSLQHYZSCpPYGAZh For any Governors who has not yet undertaken it.

vi) When things go wrong – lessons learned - 26th November 2026 - 6:30pm – 8:00pm via Teams https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/383667431644529?p=M69zwN4WQxPZBIz61x A new training session session for any governor/director/clerk.

Online Training

12) NGA

The National Governors Association provides over 60 e-learning modules to support governors/directors & clerks. Training can be purchased for the whole governing body. Visit Learning Link e-learning for school governors and trustees | National Governance Association to see what they offer.

13) – Academy Annual General Meetings

Just a reminder that the dates for the **Academy** AGMs in 2027 have been set, as detailed in the last edition of Go-Governance Go-Governance-Issue-41-June-2026.pdf Please would academy Chairs & Heads/CEOs (& other staff as appropriate) ensure they put the date in their diaries.

14) - First meeting etc.

i) At your first meeting of the new year, **all** governors/directors of **any** category should sign a '**Code of Conduct**' provided by the Catholic Education Service (CES) and **not** one provided by anyone else. The CES Code Code of Conduct is suitable for all types of schools. The Code reminds every one of their obligations and is very helpful when any issues arise. Any new governors/directors joining during the year, should sign it before, or at, their first meeting. If anyone refuses to sign it, it should be reported to the Diocese immediately.

ii) It is good practice (although it is not mandatory) for our **VA maintained school** governing bodies to elect a Chair & Vice-Chair at their first meeting of the school year. Of course, the current Chair & Vice-Chair can be re-elected.

However, for all **academies**, it is **mandatory** for governing bodies & LGCs to do so (in line with their Articles of Association/Scheme of Delegation). Chairs & Vice-Chairs **must** be elected from the Foundation Governors/Directors (unless exceptionally agreed otherwise by the Members of the Trust) and again, the current Chair & Vice-Chair can be re-elected.

If any governing body/LGC should elect a **new** Chair (and/or appoint a new Clerk), please ensure to notify me, so that I can update my Chairs/Clerks contact lists, for all future communications.

iii) If any **Foundation** Governor/Director or Clerk should resign during the coming year, please would Clerks always notify me by completing the 'Resignation Form' Resignation-Form-2026.doc & submitting it to me as soon as possible, so I can update the Diocesan records.

15 – Undertakings (Academies only)

A new school year often sees the appointment of new governors. Please would Clerks/Governance Professionals of all our Local Governing Committees and Single Academy Trusts governing bodies, ensure that all new governors of any category (including Heads) sign the required undertaking form and they are returned to the Diocese as quickly as possible to ensure legal compliance. Please let me know if you need Undertaking forms.

16) Reception Intake applications for 2027-28

Every year some parents unfortunately miss the closing date to apply for Reception Intake admissions 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 2027-28 **by 30 September** 2026. 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 2027:

> **Time to start school?** If you have a child born between **1 September 2022 and 31 August 2023**, then **now** is the time to apply for a place at our school for admission from **September 2027** onwards. You must complete an application form that is available from the school admissions team of ***[INSERT NAME OF YOUR LOCAL COUNCIL(S)]***. Please ensure you apply by the closing date of **15 January 2027**. 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 2 November 2026. 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 placing 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!

17) Admission Arrangements 2028-29 - Primary

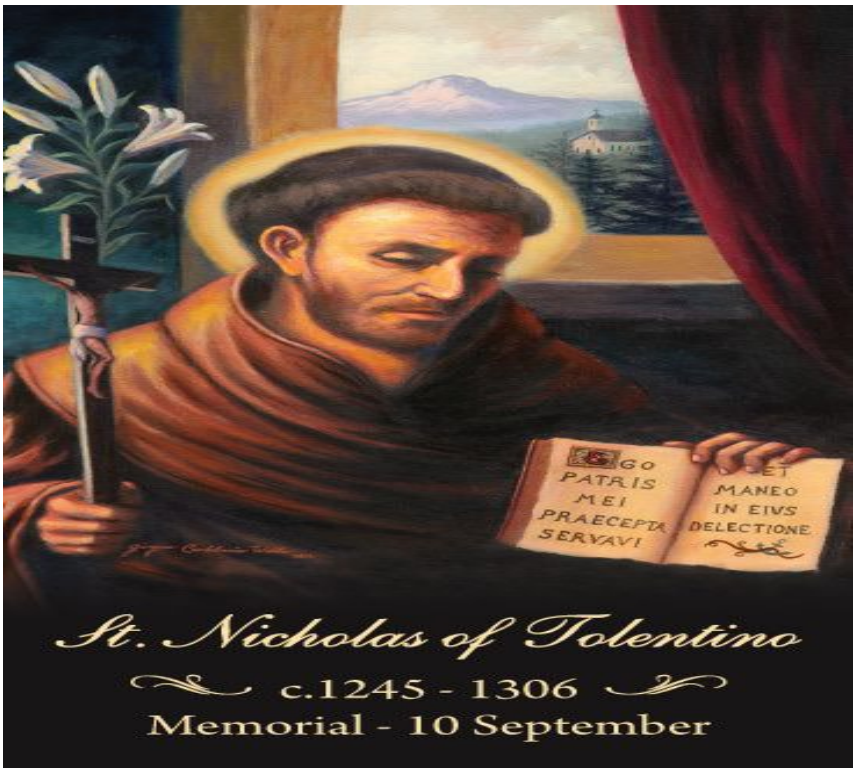
The Diocese is **not** proposing any changes to the **primary** school common admission arrangements, so school admission authorities must not undertake a consultation on their admission arrangements for **2028-29** but must determine their admission arrangements this **autumn** term – so please ensure it is a meeting agenda item. Please remember that to keep the arrangements common to all schools, no changes (other than rolling the dates forward) must be made to the arrangements – so they must be identical to the ones determined for 2027-28 (unless given express permission to do otherwise from the Diocese). Please remember that the **admissions policy** (with parish maps), the **Supplementary Information Form** and **In-Year application form** – **must** be kept

together as one complete document and **must all** be determined by the admission authority. Please just let me know if you have any queries.

18) Admission Arrangements 2028-29 – Secondary

For our secondary schools, the Diocese **is** proposing to change the common admission arrangements and so schools will be required to undertake a public consultation during this autumn term. The proposed change is to include provision for *'Children who are a member of an Eastern Christian Church.'* This will bring the arrangements in line with our primary schools (whose arrangements already include such provision) and is in accordance with the model arrangements provided by the CES. Secondary governing bodies must therefore **not** determine their arrangements until the consultation process has been completed in the spring term. Full details of the consultation process will be sent to schools very shortly.

19) – 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.

20) – Best wishes!

We sincerely hope that you enjoy this new school year is a successful and enjoyable one for you, that the difficulties are small and the rewards great. As always, we thank you for your time and commitment and may we offer you are best wishes for the year ahead.
Regards

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