

To: Headteachers, Clerks, Chairs of Governors
and Parish Priests

NEWSLETTER NO. 82

April 2005

Dear Colleague

1. Diocesan Committee for Schools and Colleges

The Diocesan Committee for Schools and Colleges met on 10th March 2005 and

- ◆ received reports from the Co-Directors and Primary and Secondary Advisers
- ◆ received reports from the Spring 2004 meetings of the eight sub-committees
- ◆ received updates on the likely impact on schools of the Education Act 2004 and the recent White Paper – 14 to 19 Education and Skills
- ◆ agreed the LCVAP building programme for 2005/6
- ◆ discussed the current review of secondary education in Bristol and possible Diocesan responses to it.

Bishop Declan expressed his concern that governors recognise their responsibility to ensure that all **reserved posts** (Headteachers, Deputy Heads and Heads/Co-ordinators of RE) are filled by practising Catholics. This is also important for any post where the postholder will deputise in the Headteacher's absence. He asked that, where governors experience difficulty in this respect, they contact one of the Co-Directors to discuss the matter with them before proceeding. He also reiterated that the Department for Schools and Colleges should be represented at all interviews for reserved posts.

2. Building Projects

As stated above, the Diocesan Committee agreed an LCVAP programme costing £1.2 million at its meeting in March. For all projects agreed in this year's programme, the Diocesan Trustees have agreed to fund the governors' 10% contribution.

Although the published figures for the LCVAP programme in 2006/7 look disappointing, the DfES indicated to Diocesan Commissioners at a recent meeting in London that, if the current government is returned to power at the forthcoming election, it is probable that the LCVAP programme will be approximately double the published figure next year. If this happens it will undoubtedly help to ease the current backlog in some LEAs.

At the same conference, the DfES announced a major re-building programme for primary schools, mirroring the 'Building Schools for the Future' initiative for secondary schools, starting in 2008. This would make available grants to VA primary schools totalling about £50 million a year in order to transform school accommodation.

3. Admission Policies & Procedures – Update

- The position of looked after children is likely to be tested this year when South Gloucestershire refer the admissions criteria of the Catholic schools in that authority to the adjudicator.
- The common admissions procedures are raising some issues in relation to:
 - Priority to first preferences
 - Late applicants
 - Waiting lists

This Department's (recently updated) recommended admissions policy and associated guidance for primary schools is available in the Directors' section of the Department's website.

4. Admissions Appeals

Thank you to those schools that have nominated potential appeal panel members and, of course, our grateful thanks to those who have allowed their names to be put forward. We still need more members urgently as appeal season is almost upon us.

The department is organising training for appeals panel members. This will take place from **2pm until 4.30pm on Tuesday 3 May** at Alexander House, Bristol.

5. Teaching Posts

The following are seeking posts in the Diocese

| Name | Subjects Studied | Tel no | E-mail |
|------------------|--|--------------|-----------------------------|
| Sionnadh Keating | Special Needs Primary and Secondary level. Looking for a post as a special needs/Learning support/dyslexia support (or humanities short term) in a Catholic Secondary School from Easter 2005 | 0117 9736707 | sionnadhkeating@hotmail.com |

| | | | |
|--|--|------------------------------------|---|
| Gemma Cullimore Almira Buemio | Primary Teacher (specialised in English) Secondary School Teacher Design Technology Art and Design | 01454 415644 0793 1332187 | stanleybabe2003@yahoo. co.uk miraD60174@hotmail.com |
|--|--|------------------------------------|---|

6. Use of school premises by other groups

- Use of school premises by the parish should be agreed with the school and is covered by Diocesan insurance.
- Use by others on a long term basis (e.g. for pre-school groups or free-standing after school groups) should be subject to a lease agreement and approved in advance by the Diocesan Trustees (via this Department). A draft lease agreement is being prepared by the Department but school governors may wish to check out their individual conditions with their own solicitors. Legal costs will have to be borne either by the governors or the group who are leasing the premises. Such groups must produce evidence of their own public liability insurance cover.
- Occasional hirers should be required to sign a lettings agreement. A model is available from the Department. Such groups must produce evidence of their own public liability insurance cover. Previous experience suggests that it is wise only to let to recognised established groups.

7. Legislation Won and Lost

Attached is Stone King's Summer 2005 Education Bulletin which summarises the legislation passed before Parliament was dissolved. The Schools Transport Bill was lost with the dissolution of Parliament although it may well be revived following the general election. The Bill seeks to set up pilot schemes across the country that will have the power to disregard the current law rooted in the provisions of the 1944 Education Act and to trial different local school transport solutions that might subsequently be rolled out nationally. This could certainly have a negative impact on our schools even though the guidelines state that denominational transport should not be adversely affected by local arrangements.

It is becoming clear that, in a bid to save money, some LEAs in the Diocese are considering pre-empting the proposed new legislation and abolishing denominational transport or introducing charging. Clearly this needs to be resisted. We are working with parents and schools in two LEAs to prepare campaigns to defend the rights of parents, currently enshrined in law, both to have the option of a Catholic school available to them for their children's education and also for them to have access to that school through affordable transport.

We are happy to share such materials with others if their LEA makes similar proposals. Please let us know if you become aware of this before we do.

8. Property valuations for insurance purposes

Insurers update property values on an index based basis each year. This does not, however, take account of major property development projects. If your school has undertaken works during the last 10 years which have increased the floor area by more than 5% you should write to the LEA officer responsible for insurance arrangements to inform him/her of this so that the current valuation can be checked. In future, a condition of approval of LCVAP and other capital improvement works costing more than £50,000 will be that the cost of revaluation for insurance purposes following completion of the project is incorporated into the fees associated with the project.

9. Mentors for Headteachers

At a recent meeting with heads of Catholic schools we were asked to try to ensure that each head in the Diocese has a colleague who will act as a mentor and support. The Diocese arranges such a mentor for heads at the time of their appointment, but that link gets broken if the mentor moves to another post. Heads who have no mentor currently should contact David or Peter, as appropriate, in order that a replacement mentor can be identified.

10. Foundation governor appointments

We wrote recently requesting that Chairs, Clerks, Parish Priests and Heads work together to help us ensure that Bishop Declan is able to appoint/re-appoint foundation governors before schools break up for the summer. Please make every effort to meet the deadlines set out. Attached to this newsletter is an outline of the duties of Foundation Governors copies of which can be given to those who might be interested in becoming a governor.

11. Governors' Training

The Department will be offering further training for Governors at 7.30pm on Tuesday 10 May at Holy Rood Junior School, Swindon and Wednesday 11 May at St. Augustine's, Trowbridge on the following topics

- Workforce Reform – implications for governing bodies of the requirement to limit the duties of teaching staff
- Section 23 Inspections – new arrangements for inspection of Religious Education and Catholic character
- Being a Governor of a Catholic School – the essential guide

A booking form is enclosed.

12. School Uniforms and Exclusions – Legal Advice

Following the recent judgement by the Court of Appeal concerning the exclusion of a Muslim pupil for wearing a jilbab to school, in contravention of the school's uniform policy, we received advice on the matter from the Diocesan solicitors, Stone King. The advice is attached to the newsletter.

13. Catholic Secondary School's Mass

This will take place on **Thursday 21st April at 11am** in Clifton Cathedral. The main celebrant will be Bishop Declan. We appreciate the demands made on schools, especially at this time of year but hope all secondary schools will be able to attend. The mass is in part a response to the late Pope John Paul's call to celebrate the year of the Eucharist and it now seems a most appropriate way to celebrate his life. The late Pope always prioritized young people and asked that as adults we help young people become aware of their role within the wider church community.

14. CAFOD

Tony Vassallo of CAFOD has asked us to thank our Catholic Schools for the wonderful support they have given to CAFOD over many years, especially at Lent and Harvest time and during emergency appeals.

He has also asked me to bring to your attention a scheme under which each school in the Diocese would receive a personal visit from CAFOD.

This is **not a fund-raising visit**, although if the school wishes to connect the visit with some activity of its own, that is quite possible.

- The aim is to raise awareness of CAFOD'S work, and why they do it.
- The objective is to reach as many Catholic schools as possible so that young people will have a better understanding of the work of CAFOD.

In order to make this possible CAFOD is seeking suitable people to visit Catholic schools within Clifton Diocese to deliver a lively presentation about CAFOD's work and mission. Expenses are covered, training is provided, materials are supplied and on-going support given. A recent parish recruitment drive was successful in some parts of the Diocese but no volunteers came forward in Bristol, where there is a large concentration of Catholic schools.

If you know of anyone who might be suitable and willing to be put forward please contact Elizabeth Smith, CAFOD South West Schools' Liaison Coordinator , tel & fax: 01823 338 903 e-mail: bsmith@cafod.org.uk

Elizabeth Smith is herself a former Headteacher of a Catholic school and is coordinating the scheme in the South West Region.

15. Education Bill

The Education Bill was given Royal Assent on 7 April to become the Education Act 2005.

The key elements of the Act include the reform of Ofsted inspections, the introduction of the School Profile, enabling powers to allow three year budgets for schools and the widened remit of the Teacher Training Agency.

The Act puts in place the legislative framework needed to deliver the New Relationship with Schools and also takes forward a number of supporting policy developments set out in the Department for Education and Skills' Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners and Every Child Matters. The changes are focused on promoting greater autonomy and diversity in the education system, and on developing the enhanced strategic role for local authorities.

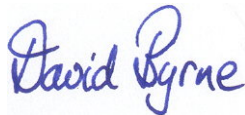
16. A Guide to the Law for School Governors – Voluntary Aided Schools

The Guide to the Law for School Governors was amended in January 2005. It is essential for every governor to have a copy of the version for Voluntary Aided Schools. The DfES no longer produce printed copies for school governors but it is available for downloading on either www.governornet.co.uk or the Department for Schools and Colleges' website at www.cliftondiocese.com/directorspolicy.php.

17. Comings and Goings

Good wishes to David Cahill following his transfer from St Benedict's, Midsomer Norton to Our Lady of Lourdes, Kingswood.

With best wishes for a smooth passage to the summer break.



David Byrne & Peter Bradshaw
Co-Directors

TRAINING FOR GOVERNORS IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Please return to: Jenny Fitzgerald, Department for Schools and Colleges, Alexander House, Pennywell Road, Bristol, BS5 0TX

I will / will not be attending the Training for Governors.

The venue I will attend is:

Holy Rood Junior School, Swindon

on Tuesday 10 May at 7.30 p.m.

St Augustine’s Catholic College, Trowbridge

on Wednesday 11 May at 7.30 p.m.

Name

School
(Please indicate the area of your school as we have several schools with the same name)

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