



To: Heads, Clerks and Chairs of Governors (by email to heads with two hard copies by post for the Chair and the Clerk)

NB The Department is now in a position to communicate direct to Chairs and Clerks by email. Following the election of the Chair at the first meeting this autumn the Clerk was asked to complete and forward to Jenny Fitzgerald a Communications Return attached to Newsletter 84. Our thanks for those received which are being processed. Would clerks who have not made a return please do so by the end of January so that we can move to electronic communication. A further copy of the communications return is attached.

NEWSLETTER NO. 85

November 2005

Dear Colleague,

1. Diocesan Committee for Schools and Colleges

The Diocesan Committee for Schools and Colleges met on 9 November 2005 and

- ◆ received reports from the Co-Directors and Primary and Secondary Advisers
- ◆ received reports from the Autumn 2005 meetings of the eight sub-committees
- ◆ received the capital project bids from schools and colleges for 2006/7
- ◆ considered and adopted the revised Diocesan guidance on extended schools (including model lease and protocol agreements with external suppliers)
- ◆ considered the Department for Schools & College's Operational Plan for 2005/6
- ◆ discussed the likely implications of the White Paper, 'Higher Standards, Better Schools For All'.
- ◆ considered and adopted Diocesan Guidance on Sex and Relationship Education in Secondary Schools
- ◆ decided in principle to review the designated areas of the Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese in light of the closure of St Thomas More School, the possible redesignation of St Benedict's Catholic College in Cheltenham, the ongoing dialogue with South Gloucestershire LA on opening a joint Catholic/Anglican School to the North East of the city of Bristol and changes in the demographic patterns throughout Clifton. The timing and nature of the review will depend on the outcome of a number of these factors.

There was considerable discussion over ways of mitigating the issue of recruitment to Catholic schools, particularly at school leadership level. Whilst the number of vacancies in Diocesan schools is in line with national figures overall, many governing bodies are having to re-advertise on a number of occasions in order to attract a suitable field.

2. Governing body decision planner

The DfES has produced a new decision planner for governing bodies. It can be downloaded here:

- [Governing Body Decision Planner](#)

Co Directors: Mr David W Byrne MSc & Mr Peter G Bradshaw MA
Primary Schools Adviser: Mrs Trisha Antolik BA DipEd, Secondary Schools Adviser: Mrs Ann Fowler BSc MA
Administrator: Mrs Jennifer Fitzgerald

The first governing body decision planner formed part of the guidance document *The Roles of Governing Bodies and Headteachers* that accompanied the *Education (School Government) (Terms of Reference) (England) Regulations 2000* (SI2000/2122).

With the introduction of the Education Act 2002 governing bodies were freed from many of the restrictions placed on them, allowing them far greater freedom to carry out their roles and duties. Therefore, rather than suggesting particular roles the governing body and head teacher might play (as set out within the previous decision planner), the new decision planner relates to the delegation of functions by the governing body. It defines if a particular task has to be legally undertaken by the whole governing body or whether it can be delegated to a committee of the governing body, an individual member of the governing body or to the head teacher. In other words, the minimum level to which a task or responsibility of the governing body can be legally delegated.

The new version of the planner aims to help governing bodies perform their strategic leadership role more effectively by delegating tasks and decisions appropriately. Governing bodies should be aware that if they choose to delegate a function to a committee, they must establish terms of reference for that committee, and these terms must be reviewed annually.

3. Schools' Race Equality Policies — from Issues to Outcomes

The DfES has issued a concise guidance document entitled 'Schools' Race Equality Policies — from Issues to Outcomes' which aims to help schools to fulfil their obligations under the Race Relations Act, and implement their statutory Race Equality Policy. It outlines practical steps that schools can take to embed race equality within their existing work in order to improve pupils' attainment and to build a school community with a positive ethos that reflects the wider community. Since most of our Catholic schools are now multi-national in character, it is important that we recognise the essential value and dignity of all our pupils and parents in line with our Christian principles. The publication of this document gives schools the opportunity to review this aspect of their mission.

The document can be accessed by logging onto the governornet website (www.governornet.co.uk) or by pressing the ctrl key and clicking onto the paragraph heading on the electronic version of this report.

4. School profile, introduced September 2005

Following the passage of the Education Act 2005, governing bodies are no longer required to hold an annual parents' meeting, nor to produce a governors' annual report. These have now been replaced by the School Profile which, we are told, will be available online at the DFES website shortly.

The format of this Profile has been agreed by ministers after consultation with schools, local authorities, governors, parents and pupils. It will include, where relevant, sections on the school's performance, pre-populated with data supplied by the DfES, as well as narrative sections for the school to complete that include the following headings:

- What have been our successes this year?
- What are we trying to improve?
- How have our results changed over time?
- How are we making sure that every child gets teaching to meet their individual needs?
- How do we make sure our pupils are healthy, safe and well-supported?

- What have we done in response to Ofsted?
- How are we working with parents and the community?

The narrative sections vary slightly in size, ranging from approximately 100 to 200 words. Further guidance, including technical advice on the completion of Profiles, will be issued before their introduction.

5. The School's Prospectus

Along with the removal of the annual parents' meeting, the governors' annual report and the introduction of the Profile, there have also been changes to the Prospectus. The only statutory requirements relating to the prospectus are that it shall include:

- Information on arrangements for the admission of pupils with disabilities
- Details of steps to prevent disabled pupils being treated less favourably than other pupils
- Details of existing facilities to assist access to the school by pupils with disabilities
- The accessibility plan (required under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995) covering future policies for increasing access to the school by pupils with disabilities
- Information about the implementation of the governing body's policy on pupils with special educational needs and any changes to the policy during the last year

This information was previously included in the governors' annual report. Aside from the above requirements, schools are free to decide the content of their prospectuses.

The exceptions to the above information are maintained nursery schools, these will continue to produce a governors' annual report. They will in the future produce a Profile but more work is needed to ascertain exactly what form this will take.

6. Foundation Governors and the Reconstitution of Governing Bodies

Where a governing body still has vacancies for one or more Foundation Governors the Clerk should contact the appropriate parish priest and ask him to forward further nomination form/s to the Department which will convey these recommendations to Bishop Declan.

Most schools have now completed reconstitution of the governing body as required by the 2002 Act. Those who have not yet done so are reminded that it is a requirement that this is completed by September 2006.

7. Section 48 Inspectors

We are pleased to inform you that, following interviews, the following have been appointed to undertake Section 48 inspections of the Catholic character and Religious Education of a school on behalf of the Bishop.

Primary

Stephen Lake
Peter Bates
Maisie Foster
Mary Barnard

Secondary

Ann Barrett
Frank Toner

8. Governor Training

Further governor training is being provided in January, and by request, we are taking the modules delivered successfully recently in Bristol to other areas of the Diocese as follows:

Wed 25 January 19.30 - 21.00 at St Peter's High, Gloucester
Thu 26 January 19.30 - 21.00 at St Augustine's, Taunton

Governors will be able to attend one of the following workshops:

1. **The Role of the Governor in a Catholic School** – this session will examine the role and responsibilities of the governing body and of individual governors. It is especially appropriate for recently appointed governors and will be led by **Peter Bradshaw**.
2. **Admissions to a Voluntary Aided School** – this topic is particularly appropriate for governors on Admission Committees and will include information on the new Draft Code of Practice for School Admissions and the role of the governing body in the case of appeals. This session will be led by **David Byrne**.
3. **New Section 48 Inspection Arrangements** – under the terms of the 2005 Education Act, arrangements for the inspection of the religious nature of denominational schools have changed substantially. The Department for Schools and Colleges, acting on behalf of the Bishop and the Governing Bodies of our Catholic schools have recruited and trained a new team of inspectors to meet the challenge. **Ann Fowler**, who is responsible for the co-ordination of Section 48 inspections within the Diocese, will lead the session. ***NB On this occasion this workshop will only be available on Wednesday in Gloucester (but will be repeated in Bristol in May)***

We would be grateful if Clerks would circulate this information to all governors and return the attached booking slip to Jenny in the office as soon as possible in order that we may cater appropriately.

9. Admissions

Please remember that each governing body of a voluntary aided school is required by law to **review its admission policy and agree the policy for September 2007 by 15 April 2006**. Consultations with the maintaining LEA and other schools in the relevant area (as determined by your Admissions Forum) must be undertaken by 1 March 2005 and then the policy agreed by 15 April 2005. The agreed policy should then be sent to those with whom your school is required to consult.

A suggested timeline is given below

- Governors' meeting to agree draft policy for consultation - Dec/Jan
- Draft admissions policy circulated to consultees (LEA will provide list and may circulate for the governors) – late Jan/early February
- Deadline for replies – 1 March 05
- Governors meeting to consider representations and finalise policy – between 1 March and 15 April 05
- Final policy to be published and sent out to consultees – within 14 days of finalisation

As you may be aware the DfES has recently consulted on a new version of both the School Admissions Code of Practice and the Admissions Appeals Code of Practice. The Draft Code on School Admissions has been rewritten and it is, in many ways, clearer and easier to follow. The main points for governors admissions committees to be aware of are that it:

- reflects legislation which requires admission authorities to give priority to looked-after children in their admission arrangements
- amends the Codes in a number of areas to clarify and strengthen guidance and to change the Admissions Code to reflect the proposals set out in the DfES's Five-Year Strategy relating to protocols for hard to place children
- identifies good and poor practice, particularly in setting oversubscription criteria

Although the Draft Codes are not yet statutory guidance, governors do need to be aware of these likely changes. In particular, admissions policies must give clear first priority to Catholic looked after children. Our advice (reinforced by a recent decision of the School Adjudicator within the Diocese) remains that other baptised Catholic children within the catchment area of the school should be given second priority and then other looked after children should be placed ahead of all other non-Catholic children (including siblings) in the oversubscription criteria. LAs have been instructed by Secretary of State to refer any admission policies they believe to be breaching the Code of Practice to the Adjudicator. It is our view that if this advice is not followed then the Adjudicator will rule against the school.

Whilst many may regret the additional and continuing loss of governors' autonomy in the matter of admissions to VA schools, we must as a Church support the government's intention to do all it can to help what all statistics demonstrate to be the least successful group academically in the country i.e. children in public care.

We are updating the Department's advice to governing bodies concerning admissions and will re-issue it when the new Codes of Practice are published.

10. Education Sunday – 12 February 2006

Each school should have received, from Ann Fowler, materials concerning Education Sunday on 12 February. Last year Bishop Declan's pastoral letter in support of Catholic education was read in all parishes on Education Sunday. This year we are asking parish priests, heads and governors to work together to highlight Catholic education in the parish context. The materials are designed to assist in this and, attached to this newsletter is an outline which we hope might be used by heads and/or chairs to report briefly to the parish community prior to the blessing at the masses that weekend. **Despite the potential difficulty of Education Sunday falling at the start of a school holiday week, we ask that you approach your priest/s to ask that each school is visible in the parish communities that it serves that weekend.**

11. 'Extended Schools' initiatives and the use of school premises other than by the school itself

The Department completed revision of its guidance on these matters at the end of October and alerted schools to the existence of the document on the Department's website (within the Clifton Diocese website). Any governing body engaged in, or considering, involvement in

- early years provision,
- pre-school day/after school day provision, or
- the letting of their premises to external groups

should study this guidance carefully and follow it in order to avoid possible future difficulties.

12. LCVAP Projects

The allocations of Local Authority Coordinated Voluntary-Aided Programme (LCVAP) funds for 2006/07 for each LA area have been announced by the DfES and represent a welcome increase on the current year. Discussions have begun with Local Authority (LA) and Church of England colleagues to identify projects to be included in the 2006/07 programme and schools which submitted project proposals in the summer will be informed of the outcome during the coming weeks.

The Diocesan Trustees have budgeted £150,000 to support LCVAP projects in schools in the next financial year. This will meet the 10% contribution for projects amounting to £1.5 million. The Trustees have also committed themselves in principle to supporting two successful targeted capital projects amounting to almost £7 million in total. Should the Diocese be successful in identifying grant aid for LCVAP projects amounting to more than £1.5 million, it will be necessary to discuss with schools ways in which the difference in the 10% contribution can be raised. It is an issue which will be discussed at next term's Diocesan Sub-Committee meetings.

13. Clifton Diocesan Directory 2006

The Diocesan Directory contains details of all Diocesan schools and is a valuable guide to parishes and Diocesan services. Copies can be ordered from Tom Bigwood at the Bishop's Office – 0117 973 3072.

14. Forthcoming events

A Department calendar of 2005/06 events was issued to schools in July. The following are of importance to all schools in the period to Easter

Fri	13 January	Headteachers' Retreat at Ammerdown, Radstock
Wed	25	Governor training –19.30 St Peter's High, Gloucester
Thu	26	Governor training -19.30 St Augustine's, Taunton
Sun	12 February	Education Sunday

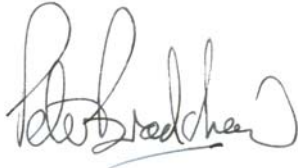
Diocesan Sub-Committee meetings

Mon	6 February	14.00 Somerset at SS Joseph & Teresa
Tue	7	16.00 Wiltshire at St Augustine's
Wed	8	14.00 Independent Schools at Prior Park
Tue	21	10.45 B&NES at St John's Presbytery
Wed	22	19.30 Swindon at Holy Family
Mon	27	14.30 N Somerset at St Francis
Tue	28	14.00 Bristol at Alexander House
Wed	1 March	14.00 Gloucestershire at St Peter's Primary
Thu	2	14.00 S Gloucestershire at St Augustine's
Tue	21 March	Committee for Schools & Colleges – 10.30 at Alexander house
Wed	22	Clergy training – 'The priest & the Catholic school' 13.00 (lunch) for 14.00 at Alexander House

15. Congratulations and good wishes

Congratulations and best wishes to Tony Nicholas who takes up his post as Headteacher of St Benedict's, Midsomer Norton in January.

On behalf of all in the Department we wish you a joyful rest over Christmas and the very best of what 2006 can offer you, your school and your family.



Peter Bradshaw
Co-Directors



David Byrne

Attachments:

Communications reply form
Governor Training booking form
Outline of talk for Education Sunday

TRAINING FOR GOVERNORS IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

*Please return to Jenny Fitzgerald, Clifton Diocesan Department for Schools and Colleges,
Alexander House, 160 Pennywell Road, Bristol BS5 0TX as soon as possible*

The following Governors will be attending the Training for Governors indicated below:

Wed 25 January 19.30 -21.00 at St Peter's High, Gloucester

(please tick one)

Thu 26 January 19.30 -21.00 at St Augustine's, Taunton

Names

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School

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

Please enter the number of governors attending each session below

The Role of the Governor in a Catholic School

Admissions in a Voluntary Aided School

New Section 48 Inspection Arrangements (only available in Gloucester)

Thank you

DEPARTMENT FOR SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

COMMUNICATIONS RETURN

Please print in **BLOCK CAPITALS** (except e-mail addresses)

School:

Area: (i.e. Devizes, Bridgwater, Portishead)

Chair of Governors

Name

Date of Election Phone Number

e-mail address:

Headteacher

Name

Phone Number

e-mail address:

Clerk

Name

Phone Number

e-mail address:

Clerk's address for correspondence

i.e. home or school

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Please return to Jenny Fitzgerald at the Department for Schools and Colleges by no later than the end of November 2005

Talk for Education Sunday:

Notes are provided below. We would hope that the brief version would be covered in every Church. If you are given more time please include some of the additional points. Please remember to name all schools which serve your area.

Brief Version

- Introduce yourself and background (e.g. Head, Chair, member of staff)
- Thanks to priest for opportunity to speak about Catholic education on Education Sunday.
- Catholic schools have a key role in the mission of the church; they exist like the Church, not for their own sake but to communicate Christ to others. Clement of Alexandria said “to give a child a good education is always a work of salvation”
- In this country, as a result of the efforts and sacrifices of previous generations, we are fortunate to have an established network of nearly 2,500 Catholic schools, with almost all the cost of running them met by the state.
- In our own Diocese there are 75 maintained and independent Catholic schools educating over 20,000 young people.
- Our own parish is served by (mention **ALL** the Catholic schools – primary, secondary/sixth form college & independent)
- Catholic schools are not secular schools with RE tagged on; nor are they simply schools where we go to mass. Catholic Schools exist to offer a radical alternative to state schools
- Within these schools we try to present a synthesis of faith and life, we celebrate and live out the vision of the Gospel; we try to be a community based around the presence of the risen Christ. This means helping individuals discover God in the ordinary events of their lives. *(If you have a slightly longer period please include points from the notes below).*
- The work of Catholic schools is assisted by the Catholic Education Service at national level and the Diocesan Department for Schools and Colleges at a local level. The second collection today is to help fund their work.
- On behalf of the Heads, Governors, and Staff of all these schools may I thank you, whether or not you currently have children of school age, for the support you give to the work of the schools through the parish and ask for your continuing prayers for our work.

Additional points

- Within the school we try to present a synthesis of faith and life, we celebrate and live out the vision of the Gospel; we try to be a community based around the presence of the risen Christ. This means helping individuals discover God in the ordinary events of their lives.
- All schools take part in the pursuit of truth; all schools would claim to put the person at the centre of their policies, catholic schools do the same. For us however this means something specific. we aim to make the promotion of the human person the goal of education, because we believe that all people are created in the image of God, that Christ reveals what it means to be human and that their exists within the heart of God a dream for every individual. Our task is to help those we come into contact with discover that purpose to “draw out of them the truth of their heart.”
- Bearing witness to the Gospel is not some nebulous ideal; it isn’t enough to say we’ll just be nice to each other. The gospel makes demands on people; it calls us to live in a

particular way. It means that all our policies and practices, the entire curriculum, not just RE is effected, and it means that we deliberately attend to the presence of God in our midst, that we are people of prayer.

- Our beliefs do not narrow our view of life, faith does not counteract reason; Pope John Paul said “Faith and reason are the wings on which the human spirit flies” we are encouraging students to look beyond to see choices and options that the secular world does not offer.
- Living by the Gospel means making difficult choices. The school like the church must have an option for the poor; this means poor emotionally, spiritually, academically, socially, economically, behaviourally. All are welcome. Society itself is based largely on a premise of individual freedom but we are called to work for others, we are a materialistic society we are told we can buy our way to success and happiness, but we need to challenge these values. Schools strive to use a language which talks about justice; about the need for reconciliation; about the need for salvation; “my hope is based on the Lord who made heaven and earth”
- When adults work with children they model a way of being human. In a society which is often restless, lost selfish’ frightened, hurting and without hope; in a world which is broken, torn apart by violence and greed; it is important to present to young people a vision of God’s kingdom, where the poor and disadvantaged find true justice, to offer them an experience of communion with each other with God. They may chose to reject this vision, they may chose to walk other paths but if we aren’t there we lose an amazing opportunity to answer the call of Christ to show others what it means to be fully alive.
- None of this is possible without teachers who can develop the vision, who are willing to see the work as a vocation. Pope John Paul said “ the world will listen to teachers if they are first witness “ We do not need perfect people, we need people who will have the openness to share their stories, to try to live out God’s call, to be willing to travel with young people on their faith journeys. we teachers with the imagination and vision to see Catholic schools as places of inclusiveness where all are welcome and where God’s love is visible