



CHAIR
OF
GOVERNORS
handbook

September 2021

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CONTEXT

section 1

1. Welcome

“If our schools are not a space where another humanity is being created,
where another wisdom is taking root,
where another society is being created,
where hope and transcendence have a place,
then we are losing out on making a unique contribution to this historical moment.”

Pope Francis

Governors play a vital part in providing strategic leadership for our schools; they have been described, including by government ministers, as the ‘unsung heroes’ of the educational system. Chairs of governors take on an even more demanding role in providing support and challenge for our schools and in ensuring that our Catholic schools continue their important mission within the life of the church.

The Archbishop is very grateful for the time and commitment that chairs of governors give voluntarily in fulfilling this very arduous role. Thank you for all your service.

2. Function of this handbook

This handbook aims to promote and support Catholic education. It deals with those areas of governance that are particular to Catholic academy trusts and voluntary aided schools. It does not seek to duplicate material on the role of the chair that can be found elsewhere, for example:

- Governance Handbook and Competency Framework
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook>
- Governance Structures and Roles
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-structures-and-roles>
- Leading Governors published in June 2014
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/leading-governors-the-role-of-the-chair-of-governors>

The Chair’s Handbook published by NGA: <http://www.nga.org.uk/chairshandbook>

3. Catholic education

“Catholic schools and colleges, the principles on which they are based and the ethos they seek to engender, are an expression of what is true about the human person and about life lived in community. Education must be based on an understanding and expression of truth. True education, therefore, cannot be value free, as some would argue, because human beings feel a deep need for clear values held in common. Likewise, education cannot be purely utilitarian, because every person has some recognition that there is more to life than work and more to the person than the expedient. If it is not to sell itself short, education must be based on the whole truth about the human person. That truth is fully expressed in the person of Jesus Christ. It is explored and presented in the living faith of the Church. That conviction of faith, and the desire to witness to it specifically in the world of education, is the ultimate rationale for our Catholic schools and colleges.”

Cardinal Vincent Nichols

The Catholic Church was the first provider of schools and universities in England. The earliest schools were cathedral and monastic schools established from the late sixth century onwards. This growing network was joined by schools based around the larger collegiate churches and, from the twelfth century by the foundation of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge and their colleges.

At the Reformation in the 16th century, the monasteries were suppressed, and the existing schools re-founded. The Catholic Church’s role as a provider of public education serving England and Wales was forced to go underground or abroad until the 1800s. In the early nineteenth century setting up Catholic schools for the Catholic community was a priority; the Catholic Poor-School Committee was established by the bishops of England and Wales (at that time still vicars-apostolic) to focus on the promotion of Catholic elementary education for the growing Catholic population, particularly fuelled by immigration in the big cities and industrial areas. Catholic schools continued to be established throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which, at a time when state involvement in education was still very limited, meant that Catholic parents from underprivileged backgrounds were nevertheless able to send their children to school. Service to those who are amongst the most disadvantaged in our society has always been central to the mission and ethos of Catholic education.

As an integral part of the mission of the church, Catholic schools have a special relationship with the Bishop who has responsibilities under canonical and civil law. Canon law provides that each diocesan bishop has strategic responsibility to commission sufficient school places to meet the needs of baptised Catholic children resident in his area. A Catholic school is one which is recognised as such by the diocesan bishop. Canon 806§1 provides that the diocesan bishop has the right of supervision, visitation and inspection of Catholic schools in his diocese. He also has the right to issue directives concerning the general regulation of Catholic schools. Canon law also states that the Bishop is to ensure academic standards in schools. Two ways in which the Bishop ensures that the Catholic life and mission of schools are maintained are through the appointment of foundation governors and oversight of the appointment of senior members of staff. He also ensures the inspection of schools at regular intervals under the provisions of section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

As chair of the diocesan trustees the Bishop also has a key role in civil law: the diocese being a registered charity. In civil law, the diocese is administered as a charitable trust according to the terms of its trust deed. All the assets of the diocese, including most of its property, e.g, parish properties, diocesan schools and parish and diocesan investments are, in civil law, the responsibility of the diocesan trustees.

The following excerpts from “Schools of Discipleship” set out some core principles that underpin our diocesan Catholic academies and schools.

a) Catholic schools have the Child at the Centre

Our schools are designed and run to ensure that the very best educational opportunities and life fulfilling experiences, within communities which have the teachings of Christ and His Church at the centre.

b) Catholic schools have Christ at their heart

Our schools are places where everyone is valued as a child of God, where every individual is enabled to mature towards their full growth in Christ and achieve their rightful potential. It is the Spirit of Christ who brings life to Catholic schools; giving strength and hope; promoting harmony and enabling reconciliation; ensuring that with enthusiasm and celebration, these things of God always take first place.

c) Catholic schools are distinctive

The school community will be anchored in the principles which flow from the Gospel by which we live. The school through its clear and visual Catholic identity, will be, for many people the place where Christ and his Church are encountered. As such Catholic schools are evangelising communities.

d) Catholic schools have a liturgical, sacramental and spiritual life

Every Catholic school is also a worshipping community. The Eucharist is the Church’s central act of worship and is the nucleus of the school’s life of faith. Classroom prayer, year and whole school liturgies and assemblies are key to the distinctive spiritual identity of Catholic schools.

e) Catholic schools are centres of excellence for Religious Education and the wider curriculum

In a Catholic school, the entire curriculum is underpinned by and expresses Catholic beliefs and values. It is vital that an understanding and knowledge of the Catholic faith permeates all aspects of school life. Religious education is a core subject in Catholic schools as demonstrated by the priority given to it within the school timetable. Promoting excellence in the quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is of paramount importance.

f) Catholic schools are collaborative

Catholic schools actively promote strong and positive links with the wider community, involving the diocese, deaneries, parishes, local authorities, families and other schools. Given that parents, or those who act in their place, are the primary educators of their children, links between the home, the school, and the parish are especially significant. Good communication is fostered so that all relationships in the school community and beyond are based on mutual respect and honesty.

g) Catholic schools are essential

Catholic schools are places where every child matters and where safety, well-being, enjoyment, tolerance, respect and dignity are reflected in all aspects of school life. Pupils are cherished for who they are as much as for what they achieve, and all achievement is recognised and celebrated.

4. The role of the chair

The chair of governors in a Catholic school will require many of the same skills as the chair of a community school or academy. It is the chair's role in every institution to give the board clear leadership and direction, keeping it focused on its core functions. All chairs, for example, will need to know how to develop the strategic role of the governing body, how to ensure that it operates as a critical friend for the school, how to conduct meetings efficiently, how to establish effective working relationships with staff and other governors and how to promote the school in the community etc.

All chairs should have an understanding not just of the role of the governing body but of the purpose of the school, why it is there, what it is trying to achieve, what is its role in society. Since Catholic schools have (or should have) a distinctive character, which is rooted in Gospel values and the teachings of the Catholic Church, the chair needs to have an understanding of the values underpinning Catholic education in order to provide strategic leadership based on these values.

The Catholic school also has a wider degree of accountability than other schools, since it must not only meet the national requirements common to all schools, but must also show the Catholic community that it is complying with its Instrument of Government by "serving at all times as a witness to the Catholic faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ". Therefore, additional abilities are required by the governing board if it is to fulfil its role of ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction and holding leaders to account for the work of the school in its entirety. This also calls for a wider range of skills from the chair of a Catholic school, who may, on occasion, be required to be involved in particularly sensitive issues.

5. Electing the chair

There is a strong expectation from the diocese that the chair would be a foundation governor, one appointed by the Bishop. The importance of the chair being a Catholic cannot be over-estimated if due regard is to be given to promoting the Catholic ethos in all aspects of school life. It is to be hoped therefore that foundation governors especially will prepare themselves to stand for election as chair, and normally a foundation governor is to be elected.

There may be occasional exceptions when governors other than foundation governors are elected chair. However, they will be governors who are practising Catholics, with a clear understanding of Catholic education and with good chairmanship skills. Governors who are paid to work at the school, for instance the headteacher and staff governors, cannot be elected as chair or vice-chair.

Where it is not possible to elect a Foundation Governor as chair the clerk or outgoing chair should discuss the situation with DOWES. It is of utmost importance that the person governors choose is able to support the school's Catholic ethos, promote its values appropriately and, most importantly, safeguard the Catholic nature of the school. It is important to plan for the future and to have a succession plan. Information to help governors draw up a strategy to ensure a chair in the future can be found [here](#)

6. Governor Hub

Governor Hub is an online service designed to help Governing Boards and Academy Trust Boards run efficiently. DOWES has invested in a subscription for diocesan schools. All schools should at least register the current members of their Governing Board on Governor Hub. The changes to any governing board must be reflected on Governor Hub. This is the database used by DOWES to communicate with all governors. It is the responsibility of the Clerk to ensure Governor Hub is up to date and reflects the current board. Governor Hub <https://app.governorhub.com> has excellent support materials and help services but please contact Amanda Crowley amandacrowley@rcdow.org.uk if you require support with registering on this platform.

DAY TO DAY RESPONSIBILITIES section 2

6. Admissions

Voluntary aided schools and academies are their own admissions authorities and can set admissions criteria but must act in accordance with the School Admissions Code and must pay regard to diocesan guidance issued by the DES. “Catholic school governing bodies have an over-riding duty to offer places to Catholics first. This is a requirement of the Trust Deed and therefore a legal requirement on governing bodies.” Diocesan guidance on admission to Catholic Schools, July 2017, page 3.

The diocesan guidance must be read in conjunction with the School Admissions Code, its associated regulations and the School Admissions Appeals Code. The guidance complements, but does not reproduce the Code. Rather, it focuses on those areas that are of most concern to the governing bodies of Catholic schools. Governors and panel members most directly concerned with admissions and appeals against admission decisions will need to be thoroughly familiar with the Code as well as this guidance. This guidance is currently being updated in light of recent changes to the School Admissions Code (July 2021) which comes into force in September 2021 (see below); as soon as this guidance has been finalised/approved, this will be forwarded to you separately. Please note, Admissions Authorities received the information/guidance from the CES concerning these changes via Governor Hub in July 2021.

The School Admissions Code can be accessed at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101050/School_admissions_code_2021.pdf

Training on Admissions is provided by DOWES; for further details/booking go to:

<https://courses.rcdow.org.uk/event/admissions-monday-22nd-november-6-00pm-to-7-00pm/>

For advice on school admissions please contact Tony Gorton tonygorton@rcdow.org.uk at DOWES

If the school governing body is planning to admit pupils over its published admissions number (PAN), this must be discussed with the Director of Education in the first instance. Any temporary accommodation will require the approval of the diocesan trustees.

If the school is planning a permanent increase in PAN, the school will need to secure the bishop’s and diocesan trustees’ approval. If the expansion requires additional accommodation then the school may be subject to a statutory process as well as trustee approval. It is important that any proposal for expansion be discussed with Nigel Spears (nigelspears@rcdow.org.uk) at DOWES in good time. **SEE ALSO** section 18.below: Pupil Placement Planning

7. Appointment and induction of Foundation Governors

a) Foundation governors' responsibilities

Foundation governors share the responsibilities of all governors to carry out the three core functions of governing bodies as set out in the Governance Handbook:

- ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance management of staff; and
- overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.

Foundation Governors are appointed in the name of the Archbishop and form the majority of the governing body. They have a legal duty to preserve and develop the Catholic character of the school, to ensure that the religious education curriculum is in accordance with the bishop's policy for his diocese, based on the Bishops' Conference Curriculum Directory and to ensure that the school is conducted in accordance with its trust deed.

This includes:

- being familiar with, and supportive of, the policies and procedures of the diocese;
- representing those policies to the governing body;
- considering not only the interests of the individual school or college, but the interests of other schools and colleges and of Catholic education throughout the diocese;
- responding to the needs of the Catholic community as a whole as represented by the Archbishop.

All those offered a foundation governorship are required to sign an undertaking to this effect.

b) Recruiting governors

Don't wait until you have a governor vacancy!

Have an on-going programme of informing parents and your local community about the work of your governing body: think of "friend-raising", sowing seeds that may blossom.

Help people understand the role of governors in your school and across the diocese. You could

- Run an information session or taster where parents can meet existing governors. This might include teaming up with other local Catholic schools to run a joint event. Advertise it via school and parish newsletters, websites and social media.
- Include a friendly, interesting and jargon-free section on the work of your governors that shows how governors have made an impact on the pupils' education on the school website;

- Consider other ways you could raise the profile of your governing body – e.g. place articles on recent governor initiatives in the school newsletter, check that appropriate communications are jointly signed by both the headteacher and chair of governors, include information in your prospectus and information for new parents, place photos and mini profiles of governors in your reception area; make use of social media;
- Make information on school governance available at school events such as meetings for new parents, parents’ evenings, open evenings, sports days and PTA events. Why not have a ‘governors table’ at your Christmas bazaar and/or summer fair?
- Invite potential governors to be observers at a meeting (but consider confidentiality issues)

For more ideas and resources to support the recruitment of governors , visit the **CES** website [here](#)

Governors for Schools is an independent charity dedicated to recruiting volunteers to serve on school governing bodies across England. Click [here](#) for further details

Academy Ambassadors provides a free, bespoke service matching business people and professionals with multi-academy trusts looking to strengthen their boards. Click [here](#)

c) Skills

All governors should demonstrate strengths in the following areas:

- a strong commitment to the role and to improving outcomes for children;
- the inquisitiveness to question and analyse;
- willingness to learn;
- good inter-personal skills;
- appropriate levels of literacy in English (unless a governing body is prepared to make special arrangements);
- sufficient numeracy skills to understand basic data.

Also, when a vacancy occurs take care to consider what particular skills your board needs. Governors of Catholic schools have specific duties and the CES has drawn up a skills audit which incorporates the skills, knowledge and experience which is mandatory or desirable for governors of a Catholic school. It is available [here](#)

“A Competency Framework for Governance: The knowledge, skills and behaviours needed for effective governance in maintained schools, academies and multi-academy trusts” sets out the competencies needed by boards for effective governance. The framework can be used:

- in individual performance review discussions, identifying training needs and/or developing a training and development programme
- planning induction for people new to the board

- supporting a review of the board’s effectiveness and identifying strengths and areas for development. See [here](#)

Remember to include in any advertisement to fill a governor vacancy the particular skills your governing body needs at the time of the appointment.

d) Checks

As a requirement of the appointment process, all governors, regardless of category, will be required to consent to the carrying out of any appropriate checks, including Disclosure and Barring Service checks (previously Criminal Records Bureau Checks), in respect of eligibility/suitability to be appointed as a school governor, and a reference from the parish priest in the case of foundation governors.

e) To help the process run smoothly

In order to process applications as quickly as possible it is very important that schools return information on the applicant’s DBS certificate as soon as possible. **It is vital to note that foundation governors are not appointed until DOWES receives this information.**

f) Induction

As part of induction and continuous development, effective boards encourage everyone involved in governance, especially those new to their role, to make the most of the resources, guidance and training available to develop their knowledge and skills.

Governance Handbook page 34

DOWES provides induction for all new governors (not just foundation governors) to help them understand their role in a Catholic school. Once you have appointed new governors please make sure they are aware of our governor induction programmes and all training opportunities available to them. The termly CPD programme can be found [here](#)

An induction pack for new governors will introduce them to the school and their role. Suggestions for the content can be found from NGA or The Key, e.g., Section 4 of The right people around the table : <http://www.nga.org.uk/Guidance/Workings-Of-The-Governing-Body/Chairs-of-Governors/The-right-people-around-the-table-a-guide-to-recru.aspx>

Using a buddy/mentor can help new governors to appreciate some of the key issues facing the governing body and feel better able to contribute quickly to the work of the GB.

Other resources include:

The Governance Handbook provides a great deal of information. Click [here](#).

‘Welcome to Governance’ is available [here](#) from the National Governance Association website and costs £6.00 for members. Some schools are automatically members of the association through the service level agreement with their local authority.

‘Christ at the Centre’ sets out the nature and purpose of Catholic schools. It is available from the CTS or can be downloaded here: <http://www.ctsbooks.org/christ-at-the-centre/>

8. Appointment of staff including senior leaders

a) Appointment of staff

In Catholic voluntary aided schools the governing body is the employer; in a CAT the board of directors is the employer but may delegate the process of appointments to the local academy council in accordance with the scheme of delegation. Being the employer helps the governing board to conduct the school in accordance with the instrument of government/articles of association; however, it also brings employer responsibilities.

The Memorandum on Appointment of Staff in Catholic Schools is an extremely important document, which has been issued by the Bishops of England and Wales and which sets out their collective requirement on all Catholic schools and colleges, including schools in the trusteeship of a religious order (which includes maintained schools, academies in England, independent schools, sixth-form colleges and non-maintained special schools) in relation to staffing and the use of CES contracts of employment, workplace policies and associated model employment documents for Catholic schools. The document can be downloaded [here](#). All Catholic school governing bodies must ensure that they have a copy of the memorandum and that they comply with it.

- Every Catholic school must the CES application forms when recruiting members of staff. These can be found [here](#)
- Every Catholic school must issue members of staff with CES contracts, which are available [here](#)

The model contracts ensure, in the context of the role within the school which the employee is employed to perform, the preservation, maintenance and development of the Catholic character of the school. It is important that governors read the user guidance available [here](#)

- Every Catholic school must use CES policies and procedures that support the CES contract and also ensure the preservation and development of the Catholic nature of the school:
Capability Disciplinary Grievance etc

Please see [here](#)

This means that governing bodies should not adopt in their entirety the personnel policies produced by their local authority (LA). If the school has a service level agreement with the LA, the LA must service the CES policies adopted by the governing body. In addition, where dismissal of any employee is a possible outcome, DOWES must be consulted before such a decision is made.

b) Appointment of leaders in Catholic schools

The Bishops of England and Wales expect as a minimum requirement that the posts of headteacher or principal, deputy headteacher or deputy principal and head or co-ordinator of religious education are to be filled by practising Catholics. The principle to be applied is that this minimum requirement will apply to the most senior leadership post i.e. the person with overall responsibility for the day to day management of the school, and the person who is the second most senior person in the leadership team. Therefore, this would apply to assistant heads if the structure of the leadership team is such that there is no deputy head.

c) Representation at short listing and interview

The Bishop is entitled to be represented at all proceedings relating to the appointment of senior leaders and teachers of religious education. Governing bodies must facilitate the attendance of the diocesan representative. Governing bodies must give sufficient advanced notification to DOWES of a vacancy for any senior post to which the requirement to be a practising Catholic is applied before taking any action, including appointing an acting headteacher or principal, acting deputy headteacher or deputy principal, or advertising the vacancy. It is particularly important to agree all meeting and interview dates with DOWES in advance, to allow diocesan officers to be involved from the beginning of the process, including drawing up job descriptions and person specifications

Governing boards intending to recruit to a post which requires a practising Catholic should contact Amanda Crowley at DOWES amandacrowley@rcdow.org.uk for further information and support. Governing bodies considering the appointment of chaplains should contact Fr David Reilly davidreilly@rcdow.org.uk and for the appointment of RE subject leaders the RE adviser of the school should be contacted.

9. Building a strong relationship with the headteacher

The relationship between the chair of governors and headteacher is vital to the success of the governing body and of the school. There is a great deal of advice and support available to help you work effectively, recognising and respecting your differing roles and responsibilities, e.g.,

- Governance Handbook page 18 available [here](#)
- in Section 3 page 10 of 'Leading Governors' published by NCTL and available [here](#)
- The document 'What governing boards should expect from school leaders and what school leaders should expect from governing bodies' is very useful. This is a joint guidance document from the

Association of School and College Leaders, the Local Government Association, the National Association of Head Teachers and the National Governors' Association available [here](#)

10. Capital Asset Management

Statlog – The Diocesan Trustees have elected to use Statlog throughout the Diocese to manager Statutory Compliance and all aspects of Capital Development.

Schools are required to purchase a Statlog Site Licence. In addition, a survey of the school and a map of the site may be required (particularly in year 1).

Governors are directly accountable for failures in Statutory Compliance management. All governors have access to Statlog and can monitor the effectiveness of the local management systems.

The active consent of the Diocesan Trustees is required before any work to a trust asset is planned. The de minimis level for Capital Work is £2,000.00. All projects over this threshold must be processed using Statlog. All schools that have secured a survey, mapped their site and are managing Statutory Compliance effectively will be granted access to the Project Manager Lite Module in Statlog. Using this module, Governors and School Leaders are able to commission Capital Work and secure the required consents from the Diocese. The system also provides a historical record of all Capital Projects that can be accessed by the School, the Diocese, and other appropriate organisations.

If you need further information please contact Nigel Spears nigelspears@rcdow.org.uk

11. Child Protection and Safeguarding

a) Governors must keep up to date with the requirements published in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'. See [here](#)

b) Governors must also be aware of their duties under the Prevent Duty available [here](#).

c) Governors should have regard to the statutory guidance set out in "Working together to safeguard children 2018" available [here](#)

d) An individual on the board should take leadership responsibility for the organisation's wider safeguarding arrangements, which include the Prevent duty. Boards should also make sure that a senior member of the school's leadership team is designated to take lead responsibility for dealing with safeguarding issues; providing advice and support to other staff; liaising with the LA; and working with other agencies. See Annex B of Keeping Children Safe in Education (above)

e) Local authorities should have designated a particular officer, or team of officers, to be involved in the management and oversight of allegations against people that work with children. This officer is commonly

known as the LADO (local authority designated officer). Allegations against members of staff or volunteers in schools should be referred to the LADO.

It is important to inform DOWES of any issues as well so that advice and support can be provided, including handling any potential publicity. **The Director of Education should be contacted in this regard.**

f) There is now a requirement for governors in maintained schools to have an enhanced criminal records bureau check from the DBS. Governance is not a regulated activity so they do not need a barred list check unless they also engage in regulated activities in addition to their governance duties.

12. Curriculum in a Catholic school

a) Curriculum

The curriculum needs to be coherent and connected. The task of linking learning across subjects is not easy and staff need help to make connections for themselves and for their pupils. For example, staff teaching science and religious education should be aware of each other's work and be conscious of the questions that will arise. In history, geography and sport, staff should know and have a common attitude to human development and skills, regard for the human body and for global responsibility. There are several successful cross curricular approaches for example, in personal, spiritual and moral development. These links help many teachers to agree common themes in learning across different subjects. More than that, such discussions can lead to a greater understanding of what is involved in educating for the spiritual and moral development of young people.

The Distinctive Curriculum of the Catholic School Guidelines for School Review – NBRIA

b) Religious Education

Religious Education is central to the curriculum of the Catholic school and is at the heart of the philosophy of Catholic education. Religious Education has developed in a way that reflects the particular identity of our Catholic schools in England and Wales. It teaches about the faith in the context of a school which proclaims the Gospel, and invites the individual to respond to the message of Christ

Religious Education Curriculum Directory (Bishops Conference 2012)

The school's Instrument of Government states that Religious Education (RE) must be given in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church. The Instrument also states that the school must be conducted in accordance with the Diocesan Trust Deed, which empowers the Bishop to give directions on the conduct of schools. Schools are expected to devote 10% of total teaching time to RE (5% at Key Stage 5). The classroom Religious Education curriculum is to be delivered in accordance with the general norms laid down by the Bishops' Conference Religious Education Curriculum Directory (2012)

The diocesan policy and other key documents on Religious Education can be accessed [here](#)

Details on the advisory team provided by DOWES to support schools in this vital area can be found [here](#)

For information on DOWES training for staff and governors, including RE link governors, and an explanation of the booking procedure please refer to the DOWES CPD Programme and guidance available [here](#)

c) Relationship & Sex Education (RSE)

From September 2020, Relationship and Sex Education becomes statutory in all Secondary Schools in England and Relationship Education becomes statutory in all Primary Schools in England. The Catholic approach to the teaching of RSE existed in Catholic schools long before the introduction of statutory RSE, and the new statutory guidance does not change our Catholic approach to teaching the sensitive aspects of this subject.

Parents are the primary educators of their children and have a right to withdraw their children from sex education so that they maintain the right to be able to deliver these highly sensitive topics themselves. Catholic schools must work closely with parents in the delivery of RSE.

The decision about what is taught in RSE is set out by a school in consultation with parents. However, the Diocesan Bishop has the final right to decide on whether a Catholic school's curriculum complies with the teaching of the Church. In Catholic schools all RSE must be taught in fidelity to, and in accordance with, the teaching of the Church. DOWES promote the CES's model RSE curriculum for both primary and secondary schools as well as sixth-form colleges. These model curricula equip pupils with the skills needed to deal with the challenges of modern society whilst staying true to the Church's teaching on the dignity of the human person made in the image and likeness of God, and on the sanctity of life.

You can find the DfE statutory guidance on Relationships, Sex and Health Education [here](#)

You can find the CES support documentation [here](#), including the model curricula and a model policy for RSE

You can find DOWES support documentation on RSE [here](#)

13. Developing links with your parish priest.

a) Position on the governing body

The diocese is very grateful for the dedicated service of so many priests on governing bodies. It is expected that parish priests will be members of the governing body of the school in their parish. It is important that the school's Parish Priest is not a member of any admissions panel. It is not recommended that the parish priest be chair of governors as this role can conflict with the priest's pastoral ministry. The priest should apply to the diocese in the usual way in order to become a foundation governor.

b) Relationships with the school

Many of our schools benefit from very warm relationships with their local clergy, who give extremely generously of their time and support pupils, staff and families. Points to consider:

- How does your school induct a new parish priest into the school/governing body?
- Do you have an assembly with staff and parents to welcome him to the school?
- Do you invite him to join in the life of the school, e.g. discuss which areas of school life he will feel most able to contribute to, from meeting parents on the playground at the end of the day from time to time to visiting an RE lesson, to presiding at liturgies?
- If the priest has come from another country, do you help him to understand the English educational system?

14. Drawing up a code of conduct for governors

“Effective boards set out clearly what they expect of individuals, particularly when they first join. A code of conduct should be maintained and communicated to all prospective appointees to set clear expectations of their role and behaviour. Explicit agreement to the code of conduct will mean there is a common reference point should any difficulties arise in the future.”

Governance Handbook page 30.

The CES has published three CES model Codes of Conduct available [here](#):

- Governors of a Governing Body of a Voluntary Aided School, Federation or Sixth Form College (in England and Wales)
- Directors of a Single Academy Trust Company or a Multi Academy Trust Company (in England)
- Governors of a Local Governing Body within a Multi Academy Trust Company (in England)

These model codes of conduct are designed to preserve and develop the Catholic character of schools and academies. Please download the appropriate policy and complete the text boxes as appropriate. See:

15. HR matters

As employers of staff, the governors of any of our schools must comply with employment legislation. Governors should ensure that they have HR advice from external advisers, e.g. the LA or another professional source. Governors should check with their HR provider that they have all the required policies and procedures in place. Policies supporting the CES contract can be found [here](#)

It would be very helpful to raise issues with DOWES early on by ringing 020 7798 9005 so that support can be offered and so that DOWES is able to deal with aggrieved parties who do approach the diocese from time to time.

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16. Insurance

a) School Buildings (Capital Asset Occupied by the Governing Body)

The primary responsibility of the governing authority of a Catholic School/Academy is to occupy and conduct the school on behalf of the Landlord (Diocesan/Religious Order Trustees) and under the supervision of the Diocesan Bishop.

In occupying a Catholic School Site, the governing authority is responsible for the maintenance and development of the assigned asset(s) and for ensuring that they are correctly insured.

The Trustees of the Diocese of Westminster commissioned the Catholic Insurance Service (CIS) to develop a school buildings insurance solution that protected Diocesan/Religious Order assets and observed the principle of “the common good”. In response to this commission, the CIS established the “Catholic Schools, Academies and Colleges Property Insurance Scheme”, using the Catholic National Mutual Ltd and Zurich Municipal as co-insurers.

The Trustees of the Diocese of Westminster formally adopted the CIS scheme in 2012, requiring the governing authority of all schools/academies occupying trust assets to use the CIS scheme. Exceptions are permitted if the governing body can establish either of the following:

- The cover that the procure is identical in scope but the premium is lower, or
- The premium is identical but the cover offered is better than that offered through the CIS

Governing authorities seeking exemption from the approved scheme can submit full details to the CIS for review. If verified, the CIS will recommend acceptance. A small number of schools have successfully secured an alternative Insurance Package by following the CIS review (and Diocesan Trustee approval) process.

The CIS Capital Asset Insurance Scheme is available to all Catholic Schools, not just those in the Diocesan General Trust. Religious Order Schools, Sixth Form Colleges and Independent School are encouraged to consider the advantages of this scheme and to discuss insurance requirements with their own Trustees as required. If you need further information on School Capital Insurance, please contact Nigel Spears nigelspears@rcdow.org.uk

b) General Insurance Cover

In addition to the insurance of capital assets, Governors will seek to secure insurance for other areas of accountability/liability. The table on the next page identifies the main types of insurances purchased by school, confirms the limitations of CIA cover, identifies packages that are normally available through local authorities and those that may have to be purchased directly.

Standard Cover provided through the CIA scheme	Cover extensions available upon request through the CIA Scheme	Cover NOT provided by CIA but is normally by your Local Authority	Other covers NOT provided by CIA but that may be available upon request from your LA
<p>All Risks Buildings Insurance</p> <p>All Risks Contents Insurance including all on-site ICT equipment</p> <p>Business Interruption Insurance. <u>Limits</u> (Primary School – £4M/24 Months), (Small Secondary School – £7M/36 Months), (Large Secondary School – £8.5M/48 Months)</p> <p>Contract Works Insurance (Automatic cover for projects up to £100,000)</p>	<p>Contract Works insurance (Contracts greater than £100,000)</p> <p>Insurance for portable computers (When taken off-site)</p> <p>Loss of Revenue (Fee income)</p> <p>Damage to Artificial Sports Pitches (MUGA)</p> <p>Money cover</p>	<p>Public Liability</p> <p>Employers Liability</p> <p>Engineering Inspections Insurance</p> <p>Libel & Slander</p> <p>Fidelity Guarantee</p> <p>Personal Accident</p> <p>School visits and journeys</p>	<p>Motor Policies</p> <p>Legal Expenses</p> <p>Staff Absence Insurance</p> <p>Deterioration of Stock</p> <p>Hirers Liability</p>

In January 2020, the Government announced that its Risk Protection Arrangement ('RPA'), an alternative to commercial insurance which had been available only for academy trusts, would be extended to Local Authority ('LA') maintained schools with effect from 1st April 2020. Consequently, from 1st April 2020, Voluntary Aided schools are able to apply to join the RPA.

The Trustees of the Diocese of Westminster have confirmed that School Governing Bodies can opt to join the RPA Scheme, as an alternative to insuring commercially via the CIS.

The RPA scheme includes a variety of insurance types/risks and is only available as a package. Governing Bodies are responsible for identifying any gaps in provision offered and purchasing products to augment/complement the RPA as appropriate.

CIS has worked with the Catholic Education Service and the Department for Education to ensure the RPA Membership Rules for VA schools correctly reflect the diocesan trustees' interests as the building owners.

17. Pupil Placement Planning

The intention of the Diocesan Bishops and the Education Commission is to provide sufficient Catholic School places to meet the demand for access to Catholic Education from Catholic families living within the Diocese. In order to monitor the effectiveness of the existing provision and plan for change and development, the Education Service may require qualitative data from all schools. Governing Bodies are expected to comply with all requests from the Diocesan Education Service (or a designated partner organisation) for data relating to Registered Pupils (or those seeking admission).

If you need further information on any aspect of Pupil Placement Planning, please contact Nigel Spears nigelspears@rcdow.org.uk

18. Performance management

Appraisal objectives should reflect the Catholic identity and mission of the School and the values it proclaims and Appraisers are expected to explore the alignment of such objectives with the School's priorities and plans, working at all times to ensure that the Catholic ethos is preserved and maintained.

Catholic Education Service

It is the chair's responsibility to ensure that there is rigorous and robust performance management of the headteacher. This should include setting relevant targets that contribute towards school improvement including the development of the Catholic life of the school.

Further information can be found in the Governance Handbook pages 74-76

19. Publication of information on governors

a) Check that the relevant governor details are on your school website:

In the interests of transparency, a governing body should publish on its website up-to-date details of its governance arrangements in a readily accessible form. (Readily accessible means that the information should be on a webpage without the need to download or open a separate document.)

This should include:

- the structure and remit of the governing body and any committees, and the full names of the chair of each;
- for each governor who has served at any point over the past 12 months:
 - their full names, date of appointment, term of office, date they stepped down (where applicable), who appointed them (in accordance with the governing body's instrument of government),
 - relevant business and pecuniary interests (as recorded in the register of interests) including:
 - governance roles in other educational institutions;
 - any material interests arising from relationships between governors or relationships between governors and school staff (including spouses, partners and close relatives); and
 - their attendance record at governing body and committee meetings over the last academic year.

Governing bodies should also publish this information for associate members, making clear whether they have voting rights on any of the committees to which they have been appointed

The Constitution of Governing Bodies of Maintained Schools is available [here](#). Academies should consult the Academy Trust Handbook which is available [here](#)

(b) Ensure information is put on Get information about schools.

Under section 538 of the Education Act 1996, maintained school governing bodies are under a duty to provide the information required and keep the information up to date as those involved in governance change.

From September 2016 the Academy Trust Handbook has required academy trusts to provide information about their members and trustees, as well as (in the case of MATs) those sitting on any local governing bodies that may be in place. Get information about schools replaces the previous EduBase system. There is helpful information (including a section on governance) to be found here

20. Self-evaluation and annual statement

Governing bodies should conduct an annual self-evaluation, to identify for themselves their existing strengths and areas for further development. The CES recommends that governing bodies use the model self-evaluation form which can feed into the diocesan inspection evaluation and is available [here](#).

The publication of a governance statement is not mandatory for voluntary aided schools; however, it is good practice and an effective way for governors to demonstrate their accountability to parents and the wider school community, at least annually. Academies are required to complete a governance statement as part of their annual report. The CES has published templates for use by Catholic schools which can be found [here](#)

CHALLENGING MOMENTS

section 3

21. Absence of the headteacher for a prolonged period

It may be that illness or family bereavement mean that a head is absent for a prolonged period. In such a situation, in order for DOWES to fulfil its responsibility and provide support for the school as well as offering pastoral care for any head in difficult circumstances, the chair should inform DOWES. This should be done by contacting the Director if the headteacher is absent through prolonged illness (more than one month) or family bereavement.

22. Complaints

The school's complaints policy should be checked annually to make sure it is up to date and that it is followed consistently. Schools are advised to use the diocesan complaints procedure which is published on the diocesan website and updated regularly. Complaints procedures must be in writing, be published on your website and set out clear timescales for the management of the complaint. NB if your school is an academy at least one member of the complaints panel must be independent of the management and running of the academy.

The DfE has published advice for schools [here](#)

There is different advice for academies [here](#)

Chairs seeking further advice on handling a complaint should contact DOWES on 020 7798 9005.

23. Complaints about a governor

The DfE advice quoted above says that the policy should set out the steps to follow in the event that a member of the governing body is the subject of the complaint (page 5) and also says "Complaints against the Chair of Governors or any individual governor should be made by writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body." (page 6) Contact details for the clerk should be included in the policy.

Further advice on handling complaints against a governor is available from the Key and NGA. Chairs can also seek advice from DOWES on 020 7798 9005.

24. Crisis management

Guidance on critical incident management was issued by DOWES to governors and headteachers in May 2017. *In all cases of a critical incident, once immediate actions to contain the situation have been taken, the*

headteacher should inform DOWES (020 7798 9005) and arrange for a representative to attend the school as soon as possible.

The Diocese has its own press office and can help with preparing a statement: Marie Saba Communications Officer 020 7798 9031 mariesaba@rcdow.org.uk

25. Diocesan Inspections

The purpose of inspection is to report to and advise the Archbishop on the quality of classroom religious education and the Catholic life of the school. Inspection also provides an opportunity to inform parents and the wider Catholic community on the quality of religious education and the school's efficacy as a Catholic community. Inspection provides an opportunity to support, challenge, evaluate and promote the work of Catholic schools and colleges. It also assists schools and colleges in the work of self-evaluation and improvement, and enables the Diocese to celebrate with schools their sense of identity and their strengths as Catholic schools.

Diocesan inspection covers two areas:

a) Classroom Religious Education

How religiously literate are pupils in the teachings and traditions of the Catholic faith and how well do they know, understand and appreciate the importance of religious faith and practice in everyday life?

b) The Catholic life of the School

How well do pupils experience the integration of faith and life through the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing in all areas of school life?

The chair of governors, or the link governor for religious education should be invited to explain:

- how the governing body fulfils its responsibilities as leaders of a Catholic school
- the vision and priorities for religious education and the Catholic life of the school
- how aware governors are of the strengths and development needs of religious education and the Catholic life of the school
- how governors are involved in the completion of the SEF and its on-going evaluation
- how they are involved in monitoring these
- to what extent the school understands and relates to its ecclesial identity.

This will often be achieved by discussing appropriate sections of the diocesan SEF, particularly about the leadership and management of the school. **Final responsibility for the SEF rests with governors.**

The inspector will need to establish whether governors are holding the headteacher to account for the leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school, and ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and the Diocese. This should include an annual performance management objective.

The Diocesan Inspection Handbook sets out the full evaluation schedule for these two areas of inspection and can be found [here](#). However, the current Framework will be replaced with the national Catholic Schools Inspectorate Framework in September 2022.

26. Suspension, disqualification or removal of a governor

If the governing body is considering suspension, disqualification or removal of a governor then the chair **MUST** contact the Director of Education for advice and the correct processes must be followed.

Governors have a general duty to act with integrity, objectivity and honesty in the best interests of the school at all times. In all relationships they are expected to exercise stewardship and draw on the teachings and example of Jesus Christ.

The suspension, disqualification or removal of a governor is therefore a decision that cannot be taken lightly, but if the circumstances warrant it, it is a necessary responsibility.

a) Grounds for suspension:

- That the governor, being a person paid to work at the school, is the subject of disciplinary proceedings in relation to his or her employment;
- That the governor is the subject of proceedings in any court or tribunal, the outcome of which may be that the governor is disqualified from continuing to hold office as governor under Schedule 6 to the Constitution Regulations 2007 or Schedule 4 to the Constitution Regulations 2012;
- That the governor has acted in a way that is inconsistent with the ethos or with the religious character of the school and has brought or is likely to bring the school or the governing body or the office of governor into disrepute; or
- That the governor is in breach of the duty of confidentiality to the school or to any member of staff or pupil at the school, (The School Governance [Roles, Procedures and Allowances] (England) Regulations 2013, Reg 17)
- If, in the view of the board, a governor fails persistently to undertake the training or development they need, then the board should consider suspending the governor on the grounds that they will be in breach of the board's code of conduct and may bring the board or the office of a governor into disrepute. (Governance handbook, page 34).

Suspensions are for a fixed period of up to six months at a time.

b) Grounds for disqualification fall into three broad categories:

- general grounds, e.g., a governor must be aged over 18 or over at the time of election or appointment;

- grounds that apply to particular categories of governor, e.g., A person is disqualified from election or appointment as a parent governor of a school if the person is an elected member of the local authority or is paid to work at the school for more than 500 hours in any twelve consecutive months; and
- grounds that arise because of particular failings or actions on the part of the governor, e.g. the governor is subject to a bankruptcy restriction order; this category includes disqualification through non-attendance (A governor who, without the consent of the governing body, has failed to attend their meetings for a continuous period of six months beginning with the date of the first such meeting the governor fails to attend, is, on the expiry of that period, disqualified from continuing to hold office as a governor of that school).

Details are set out in School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012 Regulation 17 [here](#)

For more guidance see the constitution of governing bodies of maintained schools [here](#)

All the grounds for disqualification apply also to associate members, except that associate members can be registered pupils at the school and can be under 18.

Anyone proposed or serving as a governor who is disqualified for any of the reasons set out above must notify the clerk to the governing body.

The grounds for disqualification for a foundation governor on a Local Academy Council are set out in the academy's Articles of Association and/or scheme of delegation.

c) Removal of governors

If the chair considers that it may be necessary to remove a governor it is very important that they contact DOWES before taking any action. Correct procedures must be followed.

Foundation governors in a voluntary aided school may be removed from office by the person who appointed the foundation governor. Regulations were amended in March 2017 and came into force on 1st September 2017 to allow a governing body to remove elected parent governors and elected staff governors. See [here](#).

For details see School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012 Regulations 20-24. Guidance is also to be found [here](#)

For removal of a member of a Local Academy Council see the scheme of delegation.

27. Where to find support – Diocese of Westminster Education Service (DOWES)

DOWES provides:

- fortnightly bulletins
- training and updates
- DOWES website www.education.rcdow.org.uk
- Governor Hub – Resources section
- advice and support from officers

Academy conversions = Paul Stubbings paulstubbings@rcdow.org.uk

Admissions = Tony Gorton tonygorton@rcdow.org.uk

Appointments to governing body (admin) = Carol Campbell governors@rcdow.org.uk

Appointments to SLT = Amanda Crowley amandacrowley@rcdow.org.uk

Buildings & LCVAP = Nigel Spears nigelspears@rcdow.org.uk

Complaints by a parent or member of the public = Deb Long education@rcdow.org.uk

Complaints (Other) = Peter Sweeney petersweeney@rcdow.org.uk

Concerns from a chair = Peter Sweeney petersweeney@rcdow.org.uk

Events and training = Linette Blackmore eduemc@rcdow.org.uk

Finance questions = Peter Sweeney petersweeney@rcdow.org.uk

General queries on governance law and procedures = P Sweeney petersweeney@rcdow.org.uk

Inspection issues = Nancy Conoboy nancyconoboy@rcdow.org.uk

Religious Education and Catholic Life issues = Amanda Crowley amandacrowley@rcdow.org.uk

Staffing issues = Peter Sweeney petersweeney@rcdow.org.uk

28. Where to find support – other organisations

Useful documents:

CES documents <http://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/>

Christ at the Centre (Catholic Truth Society) <http://www.ctsbooks.org/christ-at-the-centre/>

DfE publications <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications>

Evaluating the Distinctive Nature of a Catholic School 2007 (National Board of Religious Inspectors & Advisers)

Governance Handbook

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/925104/Governance_Handbook_FINAL.pdf

Keeping Children Safe in Education

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

List of statutory policies for schools and timelines

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-policies-for-schools>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mandatory-and-useful-timelines-information-for-schools>

Ofsted documents: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015>

Religious Education: Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools <https://education.rcdow.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/RE-Curriculum-Directory-2012.pdf>

Statutory guidance , for example,

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/constitution-of-governing-bodies-of-maintained-schools>

Succession Breeds Success

<http://www.thegovernor.org.uk/freedownloads/successionplanning/Succession%20breeds%20success.pdf>

The Chair's Handbook, National Governance Association <http://www.nga.org.uk/chairshandbook>

The right people around the table <http://www.nga.org.uk/News/NGA-News/Mar-2017-Aug-2017/New-recruitment-guide-%E2%80%98The-right-people-around-the.aspx>

Welcome to Governance, National Governance Association <http://www.nga.org.uk/Publications/Welcome-to-Governance-Resources.aspx>

Governors can get support from organisations such as NGA and The Key (some LAs pay for membership of one or other of these bodies as part of service level agreement or the board can join).