Guidance for Governors in Voluntary Aided Schools and Academies in the Diocese of Lancaster

September 2023

Guidance for School Governors in Catholic Voluntary Aided Schools and Academies in the Diocese of Lancaster

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1. Summary

This guidance has been prepared to assist the governors of our Catholic schools better understand their role particularly in respect of those aspects of the role which are distinctive. The main audience will be the governors of Voluntary Aided schools, but it will also be of use to all Catholic school governors.

The main aspects of the distinctive role of the governor in a Catholic school are, in summary:

- The duty to ensure that religious education and religious worship is in accordance with the teachings, doctrines and norms of the Catholic Church;
- To ensure that the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the head of department/subject leader for RE and the chaplain are practising members of the Catholic Church;
- To ensure that priority is given to Catholic children when determining admissions;
- To act as the employer of all staff employed to work at the school;
- To manage the buildings and the site on behalf of the Diocesan trustees.

These duties are additional to the normal duties of the governing board of all schools which include:

- Oversight of and accountability for the standards and quality of the education provided by the school;
- Managing the performance of the headteacher and senior staff;
- Managing the budget and all other material resources in the most effective manner for the benefit of the school.

This guidance will provide some basic assistance with the understanding of these duties and signpost further sources of information as appropriate.

The guidance also provides:

- A very brief history of Catholic education in England and Wales and an account of the role of the Bishop;
- An outline of the roles and responsibilities of a school governor;
- Some suggested terms of reference for governing body committees;
- A recommended Code of Conduct for the Governing board;
- A suggested protocol for governors' visits to schools;
- A suggested procedure for handling complaints;
- Extracts from the Code of Canon Law (1983) relevant to the work of the governing board;
- Some suggested prayers for use at governing board meetings.

This guidance will be updated regularly, suggestions for issues to be covered in future editions are welcomed.

2. Introduction

This guidance has been issued to support school governors, in particular foundation governors, in Catholic Voluntary Aided schools in the Diocese of Lancaster. It may also be helpful to governors of academies and independent schools, but any legislation referred to will generally apply only to local authority Voluntary Aided schools. The significant exception to this is the legislation pertaining to the admissions of pupils and appeals, which applies to all publically funded schools unless a specific disapplication has been applied by the Secretary of State for Education.

We have three Catholic Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) covering the length and breadth of the Diocese of Lancaster. Each MAT covers a number of deaneries and two cover more than one local authority area. The three diocesan MATs are:

Blessed Edward Bamber Catholic Multi Academy Trust covering schools on the Fylde Coast.

Mater Christi Catholic Multi Academy Trust covering schools in Cumbria and Lancaster.

Mater Ecclesiae Catholic Multi Academy Trust covering schools in Preston and rural Preston.

By 2026, Bishop Paul Swarbrick's vision is that every school in the Diocese of Lancaster will be part of a Catholic Multi Academy Trust, he was keen to emphasise the desire to protect and preserve the future of Catholic education within Multi Academy Trust families, but also enable greater collaboration and partnership amongst schools in the diocese.

The diocesan MATs are aligned in their governance arrangements, trust directors and like foundation governors, are appointed on behalf of the Bishop. All the schools and academies in the MATs have Local Governing Bodies.

This guidance does not attempt to reproduce the range of guidance available from other sources. A vast range of information will be found by typing any question a governor may have into a suitable internet search engine.

A good starting point is Governor net : http://www.governornet.co.uk which will signpost further useful links to, for example, the National Governors Association (NGA) http://www.nga.org.uk/Home.aspx.

Advice is also available from the Diocesan Education Service, details as follows:

The Education Centre
Balmoral Road
Lancaster
LA1 3BT

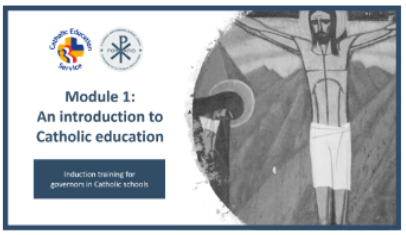
Tel: 01524 841190
Fax: 01524 846258
Email: educationservice@lancasterrcdiocese.org.uk

Governor training is provided. The main contact officers are
Frances Wygladala fran.wygladala@lrcd.org.uk and
Heather Watts hew@lancastercdiocese.org.uk

CES Formation https://www.formatio.org.uk/governors

This free online training resource is for all governors of Catholic schools, designed by the Catholic Education Service. The governance training is for all those involved in governance in schools and academies of all abilities and experience. This includes governors, local governors, and directors of Catholic Multi Academy Trusts. These modules introduce governors to the fundamentals of the Church, the distinctiveness of Catholic schools and the responsibilities and expectations of governors.

The training consists of five modules to support you in your role as governor of a Catholic school:

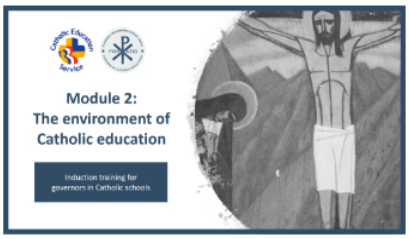


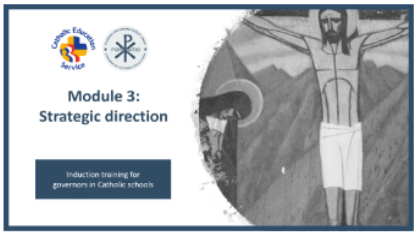
Module 1: An introduction to Catholic education (30 mins)

This module provides governors with a foundational knowledge of Catholic education, including an introduction to key terminology and channels of accountability.

Module 2: The environment of Catholic education (30 mins)

This module provides governors with a deeper understanding of the distinctive nature of Catholic education and its governance.



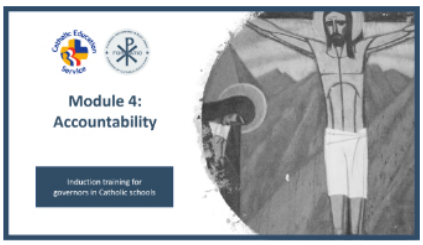


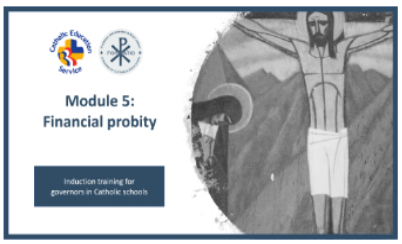
Module 3: Strategic direction (45 mins)

This module explores the ways in which the governing body provides strategic direction and looks at the intricacies of recruitment and admissions in Catholic schools.

Module 4: Accountability (45 mins)

This module explores the actors to which governors are accountable in their role and the vital role governors play during inspections.





Module 5: Financial probity (30 mins)

This module provides an introduction to the financial framework in which Catholic schools operate and the unique financial role of governors in Catholic schools.

3. A Brief History of Catholic Education in England and Wales

In England and Wales Catholic, (and Church of England) schools enjoy a status unique in the world. In our own times, the principle of state subsidies for Church schools is increasingly under challenge and for this reason, it is vital that the governors in our schools have an outline understanding of how this position came about.

Early history

The Church was the first provider of schools and universities in England. From the sixth century onwards, schools were established by cathedrals, the larger churches and monasteries. In the post reformation period, which saw the suppression of the monasteries, the role of the Catholic Church as a provider of education went underground or relocated abroad for example to Douai, St. Omer and Louvain. These schools returned to England from the late 1700s, and further schools were established, a process greatly assisted by the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829.

The re-establishment of the Catholic Hierarchy

From the 1558 Act of Settlement to the 1850s, there was no Catholic hierarchy of dioceses and parishes to structure and organise the Church as a consequence of the English Reformation. Irish immigration, a result of the Great Famine, rapidly expanded the Catholic community in the 1800s. In 1850, Pope Pius IX issued the bull *Universalis Ecclesiae* restoring the usual diocesan hierarchy. The reasons stated in the bull are:

"Considering the actual condition of Catholicism in England, reflecting on the considerable number of the Catholics, a number every day augmenting, and remarking how from day to day the obstacles become removed which chiefly opposed the propagation of the Catholic religion, we perceived that the time had arrived for restoring in England the ordinary form of ecclesiastical government, as freely constituted in other nations, where no particular cause necessitates the ministry of Vicars Apostolic."

The Position of Education

In 1847, the Catholic Poor School Committee was set up to receive and distribute the first Government grants towards the building of Catholic elementary schools and three training schools to train Catholic teachers. At the time of the re-establishment of the Catholic Church in this country, the Bishops considered the establishment of schools to be more important than churches. The school was commonly the Mass centre rather than the church.

'Wherever there may seem to be an opening for a new mission, we would prefer the erection of a school, so arranged as to serve temporarily as a chapel, to that of a church without one.' (Westminster Provincial Synod, 17 July 1852)

The Establishment of the First Elementary Schools

In the second half of the 19th Century, the Catholic community worked hard and made great sacrifices to build Catholic schools with the assistance of small grants from the state. Religious Orders in mainland Europe sent nuns, priests and monks to establish more schools.

Initially, these developments were not matched at the same rate outside the Catholic community and political pressure mounted for growth in the non-denominational sector. In 1870, the state set up 'school districts' to establish and oversee a network of non-denominational 'Board Schools' paid for by local taxes where there were insufficient voluntary school places. Also, the grants for building and maintaining Catholic schools increased to 50%. Fees were charged for schooling, but School Boards were empowered to give vouchers for free education at either Board or voluntary schools. Thus, the Education Act, 1870 laid the foundations for the 'dual system' of funding and running schools which remains in place today.

Voluntary schools were controlled by 'managers' appointed by those who build and owned the schools. In Catholic schools, the managers were appointed by the local bishop or the superior of the appropriate religious order.

Funding

Despite government grants, finding the necessary funding was a significant challenge for the Catholic community. The Education Act 1902 set up new local education authorities (LEAs) which took on the responsibility for paying teachers' salaries. In return, the LEAs received the right to appoint a proportion of the managers, and Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) had the right to inspect the schools.

By this time, the Churches were providing over 70% of the available school places, and the political opposition to public funding ('Rome on the Rates!') became increasingly vocal.

The Education Act 1944

The 'Butler Act' of 1944 established a national system of free primary and secondary education funded partly by local rates and partly by government grants. Religious education and a daily act of worship were, for the first time, made compulsory in all schools.

Government contributions towards the cost of building and maintaining schools remained at 50% until 1972 when raising the school leaving age would have created an unmanageable burden had the contribution not been raised to 75%. It was increased again to 80% in 1967 and 85% in 1975. It rose to its present level of 90% in April 2002.

Contributing to the capital costs gives the Church the right to retain its essential freedoms these are:

- To give priority to Catholic children seeking places;
- To provide, priority to Catholics when appointing staff;
- To deliver a Catholic religious education programme;
- To provide Catholic acts of worship and
- To appoint the majority of governors to each governing body to preserve the Catholic character of the school.

However, raising the ten per cent contribution challenges the diminishing contributions from Sunday collections. It takes funding from the school budget, and many will argue that state funding should rise to cover the full cost.

The struggle to create the provision we have now has been long and, at times challenging. As it was in 1850, it remains a central responsibility of all within the Catholic community to protect and develop this hard-won provision.

4. The Role of the Bishop

Catholic schools continue to provide an integral part of the state's provision in England and Wales although the proportion has now dropped to around 10%. There are some 2000 state primary schools, 450 secondary schools 40,000 teachers and 30,000 governors. In addition, there are approximately 190 independent schools and 18 non-Voluntary Aided special schools.

Catholic schools are provided by the Trustees for the purpose set out in the Trust Deed. In summary, this is to advance the Catholic religion in the diocese, to serve and support any lawful charitable purpose whether educational or otherwise promoted or supported by the Church, to make or agree any Instruments or Articles of Government as may be required, to appoint governors and to do all other things as may be requisite or appropriate to give effect to any acts of Parliament or Regulations relating to education.

The school is regulated by its Trust Deed and the provisions of the Code of Canon Law (see annex 3). The school's instrument of government reflects this requirement.

Whilst schools not in diocesan trusteeship and independent schools have their own trustees and specific requirements, all Catholic schools fall under the authority of the Bishop. There can be no Catholic school without the express authority of the diocesan bishop.

The diocesan bishop or anyone exercising Ordinary jurisdiction on his behalf appoints the foundation governors in schools in diocesan trusteeship and also has the power to remove them.

Under Canon Law, the bishop is the first teacher of religious education in Catholic schools in his diocese and has the right:

- To determine what should be taught in religious education;
- To agree the appointment of those responsible for religious education;
- To inspect all aspects of religious education in catholic schools and colleges.

The diocesan bishop has a further canonical duty to ensure there are sufficient Catholic places for those who require them, making full use of state funding where available and to ensure that the buildings are properly Voluntary Aided.

Bishop Paul Swarbrick published an academy strategy for the Diocese of Lancaster in September 2021, sharing his vision for academisation in the diocese. Every school was invited to form multi academy trusts (MATs) to protect, secure and develop the Church's mission in education in the diocese. His reasons for desiring this shift in educational policy in the diocese were outlined in his letter of 14th September 2020. The most recent academisation update was distributed in April 2023, "Growing Our Family of Schools" and contains a letter from Bishop Paul requesting all VA school to align by the end of academic year 2026.

In the Diocese of Lancaster, from day to day the Bishop is assisted in these tasks by the Diocesan Education Service.

5. The Composition of the Governing Board

As a result of changes introduced by Regulations in 2012 and 2014, the governing boards of Catholic Voluntary Aided schools and academies normally consist of:

- At least two parent governors;
- One staff governor;
- The Headteacher;
- One governor nominated by the local authority;
- Seven foundation governors.

The total number of governors is normally therefore 12.

The number of governors in each category is set out in the Instrument of Government (IOG).

The governing board acts corporately: no individual governor has the authority to act independently unless specifically authorised to do so by the governing board. The balance of numbers is therefore important.

The number of foundation governors must always outnumber the total number of all other governors by two. Thus, if there is a co-opted governor (agreed by the diocese), there must also be an additional foundation governor to retain the majority, bringing the total to 14.

The parent governors are elected by the parent body. It is for the governing body to decide how the election is organised, but vacancies should be openly advertised, and parents should be invited to put their names forward and vote.

The Regulations of 2014 introduced a requirement for governing bodies to give careful consideration to the skills required to carry out its functions effectively. These are normally identified by carrying out a skills audit (CES Governor skills audit). Before an election of parent governors takes place, the governing board should therefore set out what skills it needs at that time, and parents should be invited to say what skills they can offer.

Where the governing board has genuinely attempted to fill a parent governor vacancy by election, it has the power to appoint a person who is a parent, not necessarily of a child at the school.

The staff governor is elected by the staff employed at the school. Other members of staff may be invited to attend meetings or parts of meetings of the governing body or committees to give professional advice.

The local authority governor is a person nominated by the local authority and appointed by the governing body. There is no requirement for the governing body to appoint a person who, with good reason, the governing body does not consider suitable. The local authority will normally enquire what skills are needed before making a nomination and will often be prepared to consider nominating a person suggested by the governing body. Local authority nominations are no longer linked to political affiliation and there is no requirement on a local authority governor to attend any other meetings of the authority. A Local Governing Body of an academy within a MAT does not have a local authority governor.

In exceptional cases and with agreement from the diocese, the governing board has the power to co-opt a person to be a governor. As this position must be specified in the IOG, it will normally arise because of some permanent or long-standing association, rather than the skills and qualities of an individual. Examples might be links with a particularly significant local business or enterprise offering training or potential future employment opportunities for pupils. Any such co-option must be matched by the appointment of an additional foundation

governor to retain the overall majority.

The governing board should make every effort to ensure that the skills they require are available from the smallest possible number of governors, particularly since our Catholic schools have the benefit of seven additional governors not available to the governing boards of community and voluntary controlled schools.

The governing board may, if it sees fit and in agreement with the diocese, appoint 'Associate Members'. Associate Members are not governors, are not named as a category in the Instrument of Government and may not vote in full governing body meetings. They may, however, be allowed to vote as a member of any committee to which they are appointed by the full governing body.

The Clerk to the Governing Board

The position of clerk to the governing board is crucial. It should be thought of as being comparable to the position of company secretary in a commercial environment, not a person in attendance to take notes.

The clerk is normally not a governor and is not entitled to vote. The clerk should, however, be able to give or obtain advice on all aspects of governance and ensure that statutory requirements are being met.

A clerking service may be offered by the local authority under the terms of a service level agreement (SLA). Alternatively, the governing board may appoint its own clerk. In some schools this may be the school business manager or bursar. In others, it may be a person appointed to the role for this purpose only. In every case, the clerk must be a person with substantial administrative and organisational skills.

If the clerk is also an employee, a memorandum or contract variation note should be kept clarify when the clerk is under the direction of the headteacher and when under the direction of the governing board to avoid any potential conflict of interest.

The clerk to the governing board must:

a) attend meetings of the governing board and ensure minutes of the proceedings are produced in accordance with regulation 15(1);
b) maintain a register of members of the governing board and of associate members and report any vacancies to the governing body; and
c) perform such other tasks as may be determined by the governing board from time to time.

The Chair of the Governing Board

The chair of governors is elected by the governing board from amongst its members. An employee may not serve in the role of chair.

The term of office for the chair is set by the governing board: it may be longer than one year, but an annual election is recommended as good practice.

The chair can be any governor other than an employee but the Bishop requests that the chair should be a foundation governor.

The chair may be removed at any time by vote of the full governing board provided this is specified as an item on the agenda. This may require a special meeting in circumstances of urgency.

Term of Office

The term of office is four years from the date of appointment, except for the head teacher who holds the position for as long as he or she holds the position of headteacher unless the

Instrument of Government specifies a different term.

The Removal of Governors

With good cause, governors may be removed by the person or body who makes the appointment. Foundation governors may be removed by the person named in the IOG. LA governors, co-opted governors and **appointed** parent governors may be removed by the governing body. Elected governors cannot be removed unless their removal is required to match the number of governors specified by the IOG.

Governing boards are urged to adopt a Code of Conduct which will define clearly instances where misconduct may result in removal or suspension. An example is attached as Annex 3.

Federations

Specific variations to the composition of the governing board may be required in the case of Federations where there is more than one person holding the office of headteacher, or where an Executive Headteacher has been appointed over two schools.

6. The Roles and Responsibilities of the Governing Board

In a Catholic school, all governors, not just foundation governors, have a duty to uphold the distinctive Catholic ethos of the school. The IOG, which each governor must have, sets out this ethos succinctly. For schools in Diocesan trusteeship the ethos statement is as follows;

The School was founded by and is part of the Catholic Church. The School is to be conducted as a Catholic School in accordance with Canon Law and the teachings of the Catholic Church and in accordance with the Trust Deed of the Diocese of Lancaster and, in particular:

(a) religious education is to be in accordance with the teachings, doctrines, discipline and general and particular norms of the Catholic Church;
(b) religious worship is to be in accordance with the rites, practices, discipline and liturgical norms of the Catholic Church;

and at all times the schools are to serve as a witness to the Catholic faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The ethos statement for schools in the trusteeship of religious orders is likely to be very similar in intent but will name the relevant trustee and any particular provisions.

Foundation governors have the particular responsibility of representing the Bishop his role as teacher and leader of the diocese. They must be practising Catholics fully committed to the Bishop's vision for education across the diocese. This applies equally to schools not in diocesan trusteeship.

<u>Mission, Aims and Objectives</u>
A clear sense of purpose is essential in a school. This is generally expressed succinctly in the school's mission statement and set out in more detail in the aims and objectives. Setting the tone in this way is the responsibility of the governing board, supported by the CEO if the school has joined a MAT.

Exactly how, in detail, the mission will be lived out in school from day to day will be set out in the school improvement plan and school policies and this is one of the key responsibilities of the headteacher and other senior leaders.

The governing board should not engage in day to day, operational matters.

<u>Holding the School to Account</u>
Achieving coherence between the strategic vision and the routine activities requires a knowledge of the school. This knowledge is acquired in numerous different ways. For example

1. Reporting to the governing board
   The headteacher and other members of staff should be encouraged to report to governors. The legal requirement placed on them to do this is minimal and much depends on good will and a shared sense of purpose. It is the responsibility of the governing body to negotiate with its staff regarding the content and frequency of reports. Superfluous and onerous reporting should be avoided, as should lengthy descriptions of school activities. Good practice suggests that the template for reporting should be modelled on the current requirements of the diocesan and civil bodies responsible for inspection.

2. Newsletters and letters to parents
   Correspondence should be routinely copied to governors, preferably electronically.

3. **The school website**

The website should be a good source of information for all members of the school community, not least governors and should be compliant with Ofsted requirements.

4. **Visits to school**

Not all governors will be able to visit school while it is in session due to work or other commitments, but some may be able to do so. Official visits should be logged, and a very brief note kept regarding the purpose and any conclusions reached. These should be reported to the full governing body by the governor making the visit. Governors' visits should be covered by a policy and an example policy is attached as Annex 1.

Governors must be prepared to *ask challenging and difficult questions* which relate specifically to their key functions, such as *'why are the girls doing so much better than the boys in English but the maths scores are the same?'* or *'Why is the progress pupils make Years three and four slower than elsewhere?'* or *Why are so few pupils entered for GCSE in modern foreign languages?'*

It is never appropriate to ask questions about individual pupils, members of staff or parents in a formal meeting.

Employer of Staff

In a Catholic VA school, the governing body employs staff working at the school unless there is a contract of employment in place specifying another employer. The MAT is your employer if your school has become an academy.

Governing boards should ensure that arrangements are in place to secure good quality advice on all employment issues. This may be secured under cover of a SLA with the local authority, but other service providers are available. If a provider other than the local authority is engaged, care must be taken to ensure that legal cover is included since LA Legal Services may not be prepared to provide cover in cases where the LA has not provided the advice.

The Bishops of England and Wales expect that certain posts will be always be filled by practising Catholics. These posts are headteacher, deputy headteacher, head of RE/RE subject leader and chaplain.

Detailed guidance on the appointment of head and deputy headteacher appointments is available by email from the Education Service or through the Education Service website. The Diocese should be notified immediately when a resignation is received from a protected post to enable the recruitment process to start.

All teachers in Catholic schools and academies whether Catholic or not should be employed under a Catholic Education Service (CES) contract of employment. These are available from the CES website and should be downloaded every time an appointment is made to ensure the most up to date version is being used. It is strongly recommended, although no longer required, that the governing body and MAT also adopt CES policies and procedures for discipline and grievance.

In most cases, local authority HR services are content to use CES documentation when working with a Catholic school governing body. Governors should check that this is the case and seek an alternative provider if it is not.

The Admission of Pupils

The governing board of all publicly funded Catholic schools is the admissions authority for the school. They are required to follow the statutory *Code of Practice on Admissions,* updated in September 2021

The Code may be accessed through the following link or by typing "school admissions code 2014" into your search engine:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1001050/School_admissions_code_2021.pdf

Governing boards should be aware of the timetable for setting the schools admissions policy and arrangements. The following are the key dates for admissions in 2024 and subsequent years:

a. Consultation on proposed changes must be for a minimum of 6 weeks and must be take place between 1 October and 31 January;
b. The governing body must determine the policy no later than 28 February;
c. The policy must be published (as a minimum on the school website) and copied to the local authority no later than 15 March;
d. Any objections to the policy must be submitted to the Schools Adjudicator by 15 May;
e. The governing body must supply all the information needed by the local authority by 8 August;
f. The composite prospectus compiled by the local authority must be published on-line and in hard copy by 12 September.

Further guidance, including the standard admissions policy widely used this diocese can be found on the website.

The Management of Premises

General Responsibilities

Although the trustees own the majority of Voluntary Aided school buildings in Civil Law, the responsibility for making sure that buildings are in good order is devolved to the school governing board. The trustees, as owners, are however entitled to know about any building work being carried out in the school, even if there is no financial liability falling to them. All building work, regardless of the source of funding must be reported to the Diocesan School Building Surveyor.

The headteacher, school business manager or other appropriate senior member of staff will normally be the point of contact for day to day matters in respect of school buildings and grounds.

Guidance Available to Schools

All schools will have the services of the Diocesan Schools Building Surveyor appointed by the diocese. The surveyor will advise in respect of any building work that the Governors deem to be necessary including diocesan and Department for Education (DFE) procedures.

The surveyor should be the consulted at the initial concept phase of any change to a school building, for advice. The school should understand that the roles required in Construction Design and Management 15 (CDM 15) and how to fulfil them. Advice on this should also be sort and prepared before any scheme is started which falls under the regulations as a CDM notifiable project. If it is notifiable a coordinator will need to be involved on behalf of the Principal Contractor (the school and Governing Board) The schools' surveyor is available to assist with all of the above and to arrange any necessary documentation.

The first point of contact is Liz Dick, is 01524 596057. The Diocesan Schools Building Surveyor is Paul Lovell accessed via Liz on the same number.

Sources of Funding

Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) – This is an annual allocation calculated by formula, based on a lump sum plus an amount per pupil. Schools are notified by letter of the allocations and this is ring-fenced for the individual school. It is expected that DFC is used initially to deal with those items of work identified as urgent in a school's asset management plan or capital development plan. Some things to note with regard to DFC funding are:

It can be used for all capital work in excess of £2,000 (excluding fees and VAT), and the purchase of IT equipment and infrastructure. It may also be used to purchase equipment and loose furniture.

It cannot be used for spending deemed to be revenue items, such as leased equipment or consumables or work on playing fields or buildings on playing fields.

Schools must meet the 10% Governors' contribution for all DFC-funded projects. This funding must be drawn from a separate bank account (which can include schools revenue budgets) for audit purposes. VAT cannot be claimed on DFC.

DFC is delegated directly to schools. The DFE has effectively delegated the responsibility for organising and approving work to be carried out in diocesan schools using the DFC allocation. Liz Dick monitors the projects and expenditure on behalf of the schools and meet the DFE annual monitoring requirements on behalf of schools, including an annual return detailing DFC expenditure and a detailed audit on a randomly selected sample of schools.

DFC for academies is paid directly into the school budget and local governing bodies do not have to meet 10% contribution. Academies do not pay VAT on DFC projects.

Voluntary Aided School Condition Allocation– VASCA is an annual allocation given by the DFE to the Diocese for use by its VA Schools. It is generally used for larger capital schemes that schools would find difficulty funding from DFC. VASCA is a global allocation distributed to specific schemes identified through Asset Management Plans and may include condition, suitability, sufficiency schemes or a combination of all three.

The distribution of VASCA funding is undertaken through the School Building Committee and Local School Building Committees. Schools have the opportunity to submit requests for funding for consideration in the capital programme.

Given the larger size of projects and the limited funding available it is expected that DFC will be used to supplement the VASCA funding required for any project; this enables projects to be undertaken more quickly and also enables the capital programme to support more projects than would otherwise be the case.

The Diocesan Central School Building Fund normally provides the 10% liability for this through the Levy on schools. Parishes contribute through the Trustees who pay the administrative costs of managing school buildings.

Academies are funded at 100%. Eligible academies, sixth-form colleges and schools can apply for capital funding from the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) in an annual bidding round. For details click the link

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/condition-improvement-fund

Governing Boards' Contribution to Capital Works

In most all cases capital funding for our schools is provided at the rate of 90%. Payment of the remaining 10% of work funded through DFC will be the responsibility of the school governors. Academies receive 100% capital funding.

In the case of VASCA funding the remaining 10% will normally be met from the Diocesan Central School Building Fund (see below). Where a school's delegated budget is used to support a scheme, this must be fully funded (100%) by the school; funding in this circumstance is referred to as Governors' Non-Aided (GNA).

In some cases, a project may have a mix of funding streams i.e. DFC, GNA, VASCA or external sponsorship. Any scheme approved by the Building Projects Committee must clearly identify the source of any grant-aided funding and the source of the 10% contribution. Any Governor liability must be paid into the Diocesan account before any work begins.

Central School Building Fund (The School Levy)

The Central School Building Fund is used to support the 10% contribution for large capital projects in VA maintained schools. In recent years this fund has come under increasing pressure, largely as a result of successful bidding.

The collection of this Levy is the only method of funding the large capital schemes that need to be undertaken in our schools. It is important that the Levy is collected and banked since for every £10 that is not collected, £100 worth of work cannot be carried out. Schools are invoiced for their respective levy contribution every April.

VASCA funding is allocated to the diocese, it is allocated to VA maintained schools through the Schools Building Committee prioritised list using the knowledge and expertise of the Diocesan Schools Building Surveyor.

Part of the VASCA approval process includes confirmation of a school's contribution to the levy.

7. Religious Education and Collective Worship

The Education Service is a team dedicated to assisting schools and colleges proclaim the good news.

Diocese of Lancaster Education Service
The Education Centre
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Lancaster LA1 3BT

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Fr Michael Docherty

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Michael Merrick

Deputy Diocesan Schools Commissioner (DDSC)
Julie Jones

Advisors
Margaret Wright – Curriculum RE and Prayer & Liturgy
Fran Wygladala – Governance and Leadership

Certificate in Catholic Religious Studies (CCRS)
Christine Smith

Administration
Heather Watts

The 'Section 48' Inspection of Catholic Schools

The Bishop of Lancaster is entitled to inspect all Catholic schools located in his diocese, whether or not they are in diocesan trusteeship. Inspection is one of the ways a Bishop acts as a shepherd of his schools, protecting, supporting and encouraging them. For this reason, diocese also have a canonical and legal responsibility to ensure that the inspection of their schools witnesses to Catholic values and are compatible with both the teachings of the Church and law of the land. In November 2019, the Bishops' Conference unanimously agreed to a National Framework for the Inspection of Catholic Schools, Colleges and Academies. This provided, inter alia, for all inspectors to be accredited, on behalf of every diocesan bishop, in accordance with a national agreed protocol approved by the Department of Education and Formation.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE https://catholicschoolsinspectorate.org.uk/inspection-documents

During Section 48 inspections, the formal discussion with the governing board is the point at which representatives from the multi academy trust would be included. Given that their function is strategic not operational, they should not participate in any other part of the inspection.

The chair of governors and/or chair of directors, or any link governor of religious education should be invited to explain:

• how the governing board fulfils its responsibility as the guardian of the mission of a Catholic school.

• the vision and priorities for the Catholic life and mission of the school, religious education and prayer and liturgy.

• how aware governors and/or directors are of the strengths and development needs of the Catholic life and mission of the school, religious education and prayer and liturgy.

• how governors and/or directors are involved in the completion of the school's record of self-evaluation and its on-going evaluation.

• how they are involved in monitoring these.

• to what extent the school understands and relates to it Catholic identity and charism.

This will often be achieved by discussing appropriate sections of the school's record of self-evaluation, particularly about the leadership and management of the school. Final responsibility for the school's record of self-evaluation rests with governors and/or directors.

The inspector will need to establish whether governors and/or directors are holding the head teacher to account for the leadership and management of the Catholic life and mission of the school and ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and the diocesan bishop Directives.

8. Committees of the Governing Board

The following tasks and duties must be carried out by the full governing board and may not be delegated to a committee:

g. Decisions concerning the content, preparation or variation of the Instrument of Government;
h. Appointing, co-opting or removing governors;
i. Appointing the chairman and vice chairman and removing the chairman;
j. Suspension of governors;
k. Regulating governing body proceedings or proceedings of committees;
l. Decisions about delegation to or the setting up, membership, proceedings and review of committees, including selection panels;
m. The approval of the annual budget plan;
n. Deciding arrangements for collective worship;
o. Ensuring that relationships and sex education are taught in a way that encourages pupils to have due regard to moral considerations and the value of family life;
p. Prohibiting political indoctrination and securing balanced treatment of political issues;
q. Determining and reviewing policies on charges and remissions; and
r. Making arrangements for staff dismissal appeals.

For other tasks and duties, the governing body may wish to establish committees.

With effect from 1 September 2015, many governing bodies are smaller than they were previously.

There is no statutory requirement for governing boards in Voluntary Aided schools to establish any permanent committees. The governing board must determine the constitution, membership and terms of reference of any committee it establishes and review them annually.

Local Governing Bodies in MATs will work with the CEO on their scheme of delegation for committee structures and review them annually.

There is no requirement for committees to be comprised solely of governors. The committee may invite anyone it wishes to its meetings to advise, but not vote. The governing board may appoint Associate Members to committees who may be accorded the right to vote.

Committee work is an excellent way of involving staff, or individuals with particular skills or interests in the work of governance without the need to be appointed or elected as members of the governing board. To be quorate, however, a committee must have three governors in attendance. Any committee with fully delegated powers, for example a discipline committee with the power to dismiss staff, must have three governors in attendance to exercise the power.

Each committee must appoint a clerk. However, if the clerk is not present, it may appoint one of its number to assume the clerk's duties. Chief amongst these is to record the proceedings and ensure that the record is presented to a full meeting of the governing board.

<u>Possible Committee Structure</u>
The following guidance is offered as a starting point for discussion within governing boards. It will be reviewed regularly as good practice emerges.

There is no requirement for a school governing board to delegate anything to a committee other than disciplinary or grievance hearings and appeals which are governed by the relevant procedures.

It makes pragmatic sense however to delegate functions to a smaller group which may have more flexibility over when it is able to meet, will develop expertise in its area of responsibility, will be able to have more detailed and focused discussions and which has the power to appoint associate voting members to add to its skills and knowledge base.

An effective and well-functioning committee structure will significantly enhance the effectiveness of the governing body and ensure that full governing body meetings are no longer than they need to be.

Outline/Model Terms of Reference for Committees

The following will apply to all committees:

Membership

1. The governing board will appoint at least three governors to serve on the committee, plus the headteacher;
2. The quorum for each meeting shall be three governors;
3. The committee may if appropriate appoint associate members and may accord such members the right to vote. The committee may not appoint members of staff as associate members;
4. The committee may in addition invite any person to attend its meetings or proceedings where such a person has knowledge skills and/or experience which would be of assistance to the committee;
5. The committee will appoint a clerk who may be a member of the committee.

The Duties of the Clerk

1. To arrange meetings of the committee at least once in each term (or three times per year) with additional meetings as required;
2. To prepare an agenda for the meeting with the Headteacher and Chair of Governors working with the termly clerks briefing from the diocese and keep a note of proceedings;
3. To prepare a report on the work of the committee for each governing board meeting;
4. To maintain a record of the work of the committee.

Training and Development

The committee will ensure that its members attend training and development events relevant to its remit to ensure that their knowledge and skills are kept updated and relevant.

Delegation

The governing board delegates to the committee the authority to make decisions on its behalf unless not so authorised in the terms of reference.

The work of the governing board could be organised under the following broad headings. This will not be appropriate in every case:

Finance and Resources Committee

- Budgets
- Financial management
- Premises
- Staffing

- Business management

Curriculum Committee

- Mission and Ethos
- Parents
- Attendance and punctuality
- Personal development and well being
- EYFS outcomes
- Safeguarding
- Community cohesion
- Equalities

Pupil Support Committee

- Standards/data/outcomes for pupils
- Teaching and learning
- Narrowing the gap
- Leadership and management
- Target setting

In more detail:

Finance & Resources Committee

The Committee will take responsibility for:

i. monitoring and evaluating the budget allocated to the school to achieve best value;
ii. ensuring the governing board and the headteacher comply with local authority financial regulations;
iii. reviewing staff pay and conditions;
iv. agreeing procedures for staff conduct and discipline;
v. setting priorities for improvement and monitoring and evaluating the impact of improvement plans which relate to the committee's area of operation;
vi. developing and reviewing policies identified within the school's policy review programme and in accordance with its delegated powers.

The committee will accept full delegated responsibilities for the following duties:

- Preparation and presentation of an annual budget to the full governing body for approval;
- Agree the level of financial delegation to the Headteacher;
- Ensure that the principles of 'best value' are adhered to;
- Review, monitor and evaluate the annual maintenance programme;
- Project manage maintenance, repairs and redecoration within the budget allocation;
- Recommend an appropriate staffing structure to the full governing body for approval;
- Recruit, select and appoint staff;
- Secure the effective implementation of performance management procedures;
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of partnerships in securing improved pupil outcomes.

The committee will provide guidance to the full governing board for the following, which cannot be delegated:

- Approval of the annual budget;
- Appointment of Headteacher, and Deputy Headteacher;

- Approval of the staffing structure for the school.

Standards Committee

The committee will take the lead on:

i. monitoring and evaluating rates of progress and standards of achievement by pupils, including any underachieving groups;
ii. ensuring that the curriculum is balanced, broadly based, meets the needs of all pupils and complies with statutory requirements;
iii. setting priorities for improvement and monitoring and evaluating the impact of improvement plans which relate to the committee's area of operation;
iv. developing and reviewing policies identified within the school's policy review programme and in accordance with its delegated powers.

To accept full delegated responsibilities for the discharge of the following duties:

The committee will monitor and evaluate:

- the effectiveness of leadership and management;
- the impact of quality of teaching on rates of pupil progress and standards of achievement;
- the impact of continuing professional development on improving staff performance;
- the effectiveness of provision for children with special educational needs;
- the quality of the curriculum in securing high standards of achievement;
- the impact of any actions or interventions taken to address differential standards of achievement or rates of progress within groups of pupils (e.g. SEN, gender, free school meals, BME, EAL, children in care etc);
- pupil achievement.

The committee will advise the governing board on the following, which are not delegated:

- Setting realistic and sufficiently challenging statutory end of key stage targets;
- The school's curriculum statement;
- Approval of school policies on relationships and sex education and religious education.

Pupil Support Committee

The committee will take the lead on:

i. ensuring the health, safety and well-being of staff and pupils;
ii. promoting community cohesion and inclusive practice relating to race, gender and disability equality;
iii. overcoming barriers to learning;
iv. parental and community liaison;
v. setting priorities for improvement and monitoring and evaluating the impact of improvement plans which relate to the committee's area of operation;
vi. developing and reviewing policies identified within the school's policy review programme and in accordance with its delegated powers.

The committee will accept full delegated responsibility for the discharge of the following duties:

- To agree annual attendance targets and monitor progress towards achieving these;
- To gather the views of stakeholders and report on these, in order that outcomes are effectively used to inform planning;
- To monitor and evaluate:
  (a) the impact of the school's punctuality, attendance and behaviour policies;
  (b) the quality of the school's provision for personal development and well- being;
  (c) the effectiveness of care, guidance and support for learners;

(d) the extent to which pupils feel safe;

(e) the extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles;

(f) the extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community;

(g) the extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being;

(h) the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;

(i) the effectiveness with which the school promotes equal opportunity and tackles discrimination;

(j) the effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion;

(k) the effectiveness of safeguarding policies and procedures and ensure that the school complies with all health and safety and other safeguarding regulations (including child protection and safe recruitment).

9. Improving Governance

Since September 2012, OFSTED has focussed increasingly on governance, although it is no longer the subject of a discrete judgement. The chief criticism in reports is that governing bodies rely too heavily on the information provided by the headteacher.

Governing boards should therefore reflect regularly on how they can improve their own effectiveness. This section suggests some questions governors may wish to ask themselves.

Do you know what OFSTED said about governance in your most recent inspection? What has been done in response?

What other ways in addition to listening to the head does your governing body use to find out what is going on in school?

OFSTED reports that governing boards do not provide sufficient challenge to headteachers and other senior leaders.

How does your governing board balance the undoubted need to provide support but at the same time to challenge effectively?

Many headteachers' reports to governors are lengthy and detailed. A lot of work goes into their preparation. The head may be resentful of any suggestion that they are not sufficient.

How does your governing board identify what information it requires from the headteacher and why it is needed?

Strong and effective governing boards:

s. Understand their role and how it complements that of the headteacher;
t. Have a clear understanding of the key issues facing the school;
u. Have a range of skills that bring something extra;
v. Work on enhancing their ability to understand data and what needs to be done where indicated by the data;
w. Wish to hear from middle leaders about their work and future plans and how these link to the larger school improvement plan;
x. Are a visible and welcome presence in the school;
y. Set challenging targets for performance at all levels and have high expectations;
z. Do not rely solely on information provided by the headteacher.

Evaluate your governing board against these measures:
The All Party Parliamentary Group on Educational Governance and leadership has prepared a list of 20 'self-evaluation' questions for governors.

Governing board effectiveness

Right Skills: Do we have the right skills on the governing board?

- Have we completed a CES skills audit which informs the governor specification we use as the basis of governor appointment and interview?

Effectiveness: Are we as effective as we could be?

- How well do we understand our roles and responsibilities, including what it means to be strategic?
- Do we have a professional clerk who provides legal advice and oversees the governing board's induction and development needs?
- Is the size, composition and committee structure of our governing board conducive to effective working?
- How do we make use of good practice from across the country?

Role of the chair: Does our chair show strong and effective leadership?

- Do we carry out a regular 360° review of the chair's performance and elect the chair each year?
- Do we engage in good succession planning so that no governor serves for longer than two terms of office and the chair is replaced at least every six years?
- Does the chair carry out an annual review of each governor's contribution to the board's performance?

Vision, ethos and strategy

Strategy: does the school have a clear vision and strategic priorities?

- Does our vision look forward three to five years, and does it include what the children who have left the school will have achieved?
- Have we agreed a strategy with priorities for achieving our vision with key performance indicators against which we can regularly monitor and review the strategy?
- How effectively does our strategic planning cycle drive the governing board's activities and agenda setting?

Engagement: are we properly engaged with our school community, the wider school sector and the outside world?

- How well do we listen to, understand and respond to our pupils, parents and staff?
- How do we make regular reports on the work of the governing board to our parents and local community?
- What benefit does the school draw from collaboration with other schools and other sectors, locally and nationally?

Effective Accountability

Accountability of the executive: do we hold the school leaders to account?

- How well do we understand the school's performance data (including in- year progress tracking data) so we can properly hold school leaders to account?
- Do governors regularly visit the school to get to know it and monitor the implementation of the school strategy?
- How well does our policy review schedule work and how do we ensure compliance?
- Do we know how effective performance management of all staff is within the school?
- Are our financial management systems robust so we can ensure best value for money?

Impact: are we having an impact on outcomes for pupils?

- How much has the school improved over the last three years, and what has the governing board's contribution been to this?

Annex 1

Code of Conduct for the Governing Board

SCHOOL NAME:

The governing board is the school's accountable body. It is responsible for the conduct of the school and for promoting high standards. The governing board aims to ensure that children are attending a successful school which provides them with a good education and supports their well-being.

As governors of a voluntary aided school with a religious character we have a legal responsibility to ensure that the school is conducted according to Christian values and the teachings of the Catholic Church. However, whilst all governors share the same generic responsibilities it is the foundation governors who are appointed in order to fulfil special legal responsibilities. Briefly, these are:

- to preserve and develop the school's religious character; and
- to ensure that the school is conducted in accordance with the trust deed of the Diocese of Lancaster.

The governing board has the following core strategic functions:

Establishing the strategic direction by:

- setting the vision, values and objectives for the school;
- agreeing the school improvement strategy with priorities and targets
- meeting statutory duties

Ensuring accountability, by:

- appointing the Headteacher;
- monitoring progress towards targets;
- performance managing the Headteacher;
- engaging with stakeholders;
- contributing to school self-evaluation.

Ensuring financial probity, by:

- setting the budget;
- monitoring spending against the budget;
- ensuring value for money is obtained;
- ensuring risks to the organisation are managed.

As individuals on the governing board we agree to the following:

Roles and Responsibilities

- We understand the purpose of the governing board and the role of the Headteacher;
- We accept that we have no legal authority to act individually, except when the governing board has given us delegated authority to do so, and therefore we will only speak on behalf of the governing board when we have been specifically authorised to do so;
- We accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the governing board or its delegated agents. This means that we will not speak against majority decisions outside the governing body meeting;
- We have a duty to act fairly and without prejudice, and in so far as we have responsibility for staff, we will fulfil all that is expected as a good employer;
- We will encourage open government and will act appropriately;

- We will consider carefully how our decisions may affect the community and other schools;
- We will always be mindful of our responsibilities to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of our school. Our actions with the school and the local community will reflect this;
- In making or responding to criticism or complaints affecting the school we will follow the procedures established by the governing body;
- We will actively support and challenge the Headteacher;
- We are aware of the Seven Nolan Principles of Public Life.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life

Commitment

- We acknowledge that accepting office as a governor involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy;
- We will each involve ourselves actively in the work of the governing body and accept our fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees or working groups;
- We will make full efforts to attend all meetings and where we cannot attend explain in advance why we are unable to;
- We will get to know the school well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities;
- We will visit the school, with all visits to school arranged in advance with staff and undertaken within the framework established by the governing body and agreed with the Headteacher;
- We will consider seriously our individual and collective needs for training and development and will undertake relevant training.

Relationships

- We will strive to work as a team in which constructive working relationships are actively promoted;
- We will express views openly, courteously and respectfully in our communications with other governors;
- We will support the chair in their role of ensuring appropriate conduct both at meetings and at all times;
- We are prepared to answer queries from other governors in relation to delegated functions and take into account any concerns expressed, and we will acknowledge the time, effort and skills that have been committed to the delegated function by those involved;
- We will seek to develop effective working relationships with our Headteacher, staff and parents, the diocese, local authority and other relevant agencies and the community.

Confidentiality

- We will observe complete confidentiality when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern specific members of staff or pupils, both inside and outside the school;
- We will exercise the greatest prudence at all times when discussions regarding school business arise outside a governing body meeting;
- We will not reveal the details of any governing board vote.

Conflicts of Interest

- We will record any pecuniary or other business interest that we have in connection with the governing board's business in the Register of Business Interests, and if any such conflicted matter arises in a meeting we will offer to leave the meeting for the appropriate length of time;
- Similarly, we will declare and personal interest, such as friend and family connections, and offer to leave the meeting for the appropriate length of time;
- We will act in the best interests of the school as a whole and not as a representative of any

group, even if elected to the governing board.

Breach of this Code of Conduct

- If we believe this Code has been breached, we will raise this issue with the chair and the chair will investigate; the governing board will only use suspension / removal as a last resort after seeking to resolve any difficulties or disputes in more construction ways;
- Should it be the chair we believe has breached this Code, another governor, such as the vice chair, will investigate.

Adapted from the NGA Code of Practice for School and academy Governing Bodies, August 2014

With further additions relating to the role of a Foundation Governor

Annex 2

Suggested Protocol for Governors Visits

The professional school staff welcome visits from individual governors. This policy explains why such visits are valuable and sets out a framework of reasonable expectations for all parties for the conduct of visits.

Why should a governor visit the school?

The governing body as a collective whole has many essential duties and responsibilities, principal amongst which are:

- To ensure that education at the school is conducted in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church and that the school serves as witness at all times to the Catholic faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ;
- To ensure that the school strives, at all times, to achieve excellence in all its pursuits;
- To ensure that all activities in the school are conducted in accordance with the school's Mission Statement.

In the main, the governing board achieves this by receiving reports at its meetings on specific aspects of the school's work from the relevant professionals, including the staff of the school and appropriately qualified and skilled external partners, such as officers of the Local Authority, the Diocese of Lancaster and various government agencies such as Ofsted.

In order to evaluate and understand fully the reports presented to the governing board, it is essential for individual governors to experience the context in which the school operates from day to day. This experience and understanding can only come from visits to the school whilst it is in session.

It is important that governors remember the purpose of governor visits is not to assess the quality of teaching or to pursue issues that relate to the day-to-day management of the school other than as agreed with the head teacher. Such visits must be viewed by staff as a genuine interest on the part of the governor rather than an inspection or judgement of the work of an individual.

The most effective visits will be those which form part of a strategic programme to:

- Improve governor knowledge of the school, its staff, needs, priorities, strengths and areas for improvement;
- Monitor and assess the priorities as outlined in the development plan;
- Assist the governing body in fulfilling its statutory duties.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that visits are constructive and are valued as an important part of the school's self-evaluation process.

Planning the visit

A carefully planned visit by a governor can generate evidence that will inform decision-making by the whole governing body or its committees. It is essential that governors and staff are clear about the reasons for such visits and have agreed the way in which the particular visit should be conducted.

1. Before the visit

Every visit should have a clearly defined focus and should be pre-arranged. This focus may be prompted by:

- A specific responsibility for an area of work delegated by the governing board to an individual governor, for example, special educational needs;

- A monitoring activity arising from an action plan;
- A suggestion from the headteacher;
- An issue arising from a discussion within a governing body or committee meeting;
- The need to review a specific policy.

The member of staff who will accompany the governor during the visit should be identified at an early stage and early conversation should take place to discuss and clarify the focus and the practicalities, formalities and courtesies.

2. During the visit

The visiting governor is expected to comply with all normal rules applying to visitors including being punctual, reporting to reception on arrival, signing in and wearing a badge. Be aware that schools run to a very strict timetable. Arriving early or late for an appointment may be disruptive or difficult to manage. Do not expect a member of staff to break off from another activity to accommodate arrival or departure at other than the agreed times.

During the visit, the governor should:

- Be discrete, courteous and respectful to all staff and pupils;
- Avoid communicating any judgements or giving any impression that the visit is an inspection;
- Be open minded and prepared to learn;
- Be prepared to think in ways that may differ from previous experience;
- Engage with pupils if and when invited to do so;
- Show interest in the work;
- Remain objective.

3. After the visit

- Discuss your observations with the relevant member of staff as soon as possible;
- Make notes while the visit is still fresh in your mind;
- Never include comments about individual children – if you have concerns, discuss them privately with the teacher and the Headteacher;
- Remember that monitoring and making judgements about the performance of staff is the role of the headteacher, not the governors. It is a professional matter;
- Prepare a draft report of your observations and share it with the member of staff and the Headteacher;
- If appropriate, and taking their comments into account, prepare a final brief written report to be circulated to the governing body before the next meeting.

4. Preparing a Report to the Governing Board

It will not always be either appropriate or necessary to prepare a report for the governing board (or committee) after each visit, but this could be valuable evidence to inform the governing body's decision making processes, for example if a decision is needed about the investment of significant sums of money.
The report should be written, brief and may be in a very simple note form. It should always include a brief evaluation summarising the benefits of the visit. Where a report concerns the work of a specific member of staff, for example a subject co-ordinator, it is essential it is shared with the relevant person and the headteacher before it is issued to other governors.

Governor's visits will be a fixed item on the agenda for the termly full governing body meeting.

Code of Canon Law

Whilst the governing bodies of Catholic schools must comply with all civil statutes, they must also comply with the *Code of Canon Law (1983)*.

The *Code* includes a substantial section relating to Catholic Education. All governors, but in particular foundation governors, should have a general understanding of its main provisions.

Canon 795
Education must pay regard to the formation of the whole person so that all may attain their eternal destiny and at the same time promote the common good of society. Children and young persons are therefore to be cared for in such a way that their physical, moral and intellectual talents may develop in a harmonious manner, so that they may attain a greater sense of responsibility and a right use of freedom, and be formed to take an active part in social life.

Canon 798
Parents are to send their children to those schools which will provide for their catholic education. If they cannot do this, they are bound to ensure the proper Catholic education of their children outside the school.

Canon 800
&1. The Church has the right to establish and to direct schools for any field of study or of any kind or grade.
&2. Christ's faithful are to promote Catholic schools doing everything possible to help in establishing and maintaining them.

Canon 802
If there are no schools in which an education is provided that is imbued with a Christian spirit, the Diocesan Bishop has the responsibility of ensuring that such schools are established.

Canon 803
&2. Formation and education in a Catholic school must be based on the principles of Catholic doctrine and the teachers must be outstanding in true doctrine and uprightness of life.
&3. No school, even if it is in fact Catholic may bear the title 'Catholic school' except by the consent of the competent ecclesiastical authority.

Canon 806
The Diocesan Bishop has the right to watch over and inspect the catholic schools situated in his territory, even those established or directed by members of religious institutes. He also has the right to issue directives concerning the general regulation of catholic schools; these directives apply also to schools conducted by members of a religious institute, although they retain their autonomy in the internal management of their schools.

Those who are in charge of Catholic schools are to ensure, under the supervision of the local Ordinary, that the formation given in them is, in its academic standards, at least as outstanding as that in other schools in the area.

General Complaints Procedure

Informal Procedure

As a matter of daily routine, schools have many contacts with parents and other interested parties some of which have the potential to result in a dispute. The overwhelming majority of these potential disputes are dealt with by exchanging information, by clarification, by explanations or by offering a simple acknowledgement that something has gone wrong. In some cases, in order to settle a dispute, there may be a need to arrange a meeting with a more senior or experienced member of staff. If the matter is resolved at this early stage, it is usually regarded as closed. If a meeting with a senior member of staff has been deemed necessary, a note of the meeting should be kept in case the difficulty recurs in future.

Scope of the Formal Procedure

Where a matter is more serious, it may be raised as a formal complaint to be dealt with under this procedure.

This procedure is designed to be used in the case of formal complaints from parents, neighbours and the public as well as any other third party. It should not be used in circumstances where other specific procedures such as the Safeguarding, Grievance or Discipline Procedures are more appropriate. The general principles of the procedure are, however, likely to be applicable in a wide variety of circumstances.

Child protection or safeguarding issues, however apparently trivial, must be addressed to the Local Authority Designated Officer for Safeguarding (LADO) in the first instance. In such cases, if the LADO is satisfied that no external agency such as Police or Social Services needs to be involved, the complaint may be referred back to the school to be dealt with under this General Complaints Procedure.

Other statutory procedures are in place to deal with complaints about admissions, exclusions or SEN provision. These procedures incorporate a course of appeal to an authority beyond and independent of the school.

Principles

The aim is always to resolve complaints as quickly as possible and at the lowest possible level. Discretion is strongly recommended and only those who need to be involved to help settle the matter should be involved in the discussions.

At every stage, the procedure should be regarded as investigatory to establish facts so that the appropriate decision makers have the information needed to take the appropriate action.

Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated under this procedure unless there is substantial independent evidence provided at the instigation of the complaint and/or it is in the public interest to pursue the complaint and/or it is clear that a conclusion might be reached without the evidence of the complainant.

In the first instance, wherever possible, the complainant should raise his or her complaint with the person against whom it is made and every effort should be made to find a resolution without recourse to any further procedure. The person complained about should always have the right to reply as soon and as simply as possible to avoid any unnecessary distress.

If this fails or is not appropriate because of the serious nature of the complaint, it should be raised with the headteacher. The headteacher may decide that it can be referred back to another senior member of staff depending on the nature of the complaint.

The headteacher will respond in writing to complainant in writing without unreasonable delay. The timescale cannot be prescribed because some investigations will be more complex than others, but

if there is to be a delay, the complainant should be informed and given reasons as soon as possible.

Where a complaint has been addressed in writing and the complainant remains dissatisfied, s/he should write to the chairman of the governing body setting out the reasons. The chair of the governing board (or another person on his or her behalf) will investigate and report back to the complainant in writing. This investigation should normally include an interview with both the complainant and the headteacher as well as any other relevant witnesses.

Any person interviewed as part of this investigation may be accompanied by another person who may be a friend, relative, workplace colleague or Trade Union representative. Any additional necessary personal support you may need, for example an interpreter or carer will always be allowed.

If any pupil needs to be interviewed as part of this procedure, the child's parents must be informed and be given the right to attend.

Representation by a solicitor will not be allowed. Tape recording of the interview will not be allowed.

Review Process

If the complainant is not satisfied with the manner in which the complaint has been addressed, the complainant may request that the governing body reviews the process followed by the school in handling the complaint. This review will be conducted by a panel of three members of the governing board normally within ten working days of receipt of the submission. The review will normally be conducted through a consideration of the written evidence and submissions, but reasonable requests to make oral representations will normally be allowed.

Summary of Key Steps

Try to resolve the difficulty informally with the person most directly involved. If necessary, ask for a meeting at a mutually convenient time.

Formal stage one: Raise the matter with the headteacher. Request a meeting. It is preferable to set out the complaint in writing before the meeting whenever possible. A pro forma can be provided to help with this, but is not essential.

Formal Stage two: Raise the matter with the chair of the governing board. At this stage, the complaint must be in writing and both the written complaint and the headteacher's written response must be made available to the chair. The chair will respond to you in writing.

Formal stage three: Review by a panel of three governors. The panel will need the original complaint, the headteacher's written response, the chairman's response and a final representation from the complainant.

Prayers for a Governors' Meeting

Father, encourage and sustain us in our endeavour to move forward in partnership for the good of the people you have placed in our care.
In your name, let us befriend, support and encourage each other in the challenge and demands of our shared responsibilities.
Help us to work together in a spirit of charity and cooperation accepting wholeheartedly that it is in collaboration that we best live out your example and best serve our school community.
We make this prayer through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, teach us to walk in your way more trustfully, to accept your truth more faithfully, and to share your life more lovingly; that by the power of the Holy Spirit we may come as one family to the kingdom of the Father; Amen

With confidence and trust, we gather in the presence of God who loves us.
In the name of the father who created us; in the name of the son who calls us to the fullness of life and in the name of the Holy Spirit who guides us with wisdom.

Spirit of God,
Guide us with your wisdom as we seek to take responsibility for the education of our young people.
May each of us give generously of our talents growing to know one another. Show us how to build a community sharing a deep concern and common purpose.
May we find together the inspiration which is and always will be Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

Father, we seek the guidance of your Holy Spirit in the business that is before us.
In planning for the future, give us vision;
In matters of finance, give us responsibility;
In dealing with people, give us love.
Help us, and all Christians whatever their settings and circumstances, in all things to honour your name, to advance your kingdom, and to carry out your will.
We ask this through Christ Our Lord.