



Birmingham Diocesan Education Service Newsletter – September 2020

Welcome Back!

The start of every school year provides an opportunity to reflect on our mission as Catholic schools and to renew our commitment to the work of Catholic education. We do so this year in extraordinary circumstances and challenges that we have not had to face before.

The gospel account of Jesus calming of the storm is one which should bring us inspiration and encouragement at this time of difficulty and challenge. We are continually invited to remember that Christ is present with us in all the circumstances of life. Our school mission statements often speak of the presence of Christ in all that we do as we strive to build the Kingdom of God.

As we continue to respond to the COVID-19 crisis we renew our commitment to the task of educating our children in safe and welcoming school communities where Christ can be found for all who work and learn within them.

GENERAL INFORMATION

DES Team News

We are delighted to report that all of our team are now back at work and ready to support our schools in providing the services we normally offer – albeit that the way in which we work will be adapted to suit the circumstances that we are in with Covid 19.

All of our team are listed on our website and their specific roles are outlined in order to assist you in contacting the best person to deal with any query that you may have. Please follow the link below to find out more:

<https://www.bdes.org.uk/the-des-team.html>

We wish a fond farewell to both Yvonne Brennan and Angela Whelan who will be leaving the DES team at the end of September. Meanwhile Yvonne Salter Wright has now officially taken up her post as the new deputy director for leadership and governance for the DES.

Maureen O'Leary has now retired and we wish her all the best for a long and happy retirement. She has been a tremendous help to the DES in terms of establishing and developing the S48 framework across the diocese, and hundreds of staff and governors have benefitted from her support and training over the past 4 years.

Communication

You may notice that those members of our team that normally work directly with schools now have mobile numbers listed on our website and on the emails you may receive from them. This is to improve communication and accessibility of our team so that schools can get in touch as and when help is needed.

Following the success of previous contact with schools during the lockdown, it is our aim to make pastoral calls to all of our schools, by telephone in the first instance. Should it be requested or necessary for us to visit a school we will discuss the necessary precautions in place in the school to ensure that both the DES visitor and the school remain safe. This approach may vary from school to school depending on the circumstances of the school.

Don Bosco House

For the immediate future Don Bosco House will remain closed for programmed events and this is likely to continue for the foreseeable future until such a time as it is safe to commence a phased return to use of DBH for meetings and training.

This will depend on the circumstances at the time.

In the meantime, we will continue to use alternative means of delivering training and meetings.

Any visitors to DBH will need to abide by the health and safety protocols in place in order to keep the working environment Covid secure.

Website

Please take time to have a look at the BDES website www.bdes.org.uk where you can find lots of useful information. It is our principle means of communication with our school communities.

Please can you remember to click on the cookies link when looking at the website as this helps us keep a count of the numbers of people visiting the website and the pages people like to look at. This helps us improve our website for your future use.

If you have any good news stories, pictures or artwork that you would like published on our website and/or displayed around Don Bosco House then please send them to c.kirby@bdes.org.uk

****Secondary School Virtual Open Days****

If you wish to share a video of your school open day through our website then please contact Charlotte on c.kirby@bdes.org.uk

Please look at the website to view links to videos from some of our schools that are offering virtual open days for prospective students. I would encourage our primary schools to support their local Catholic secondary schools by passing on these links to their parents and the wider school community.

<https://www.bdes.org.uk/virtual-open-days.html>

CATHOLIC EDUCATION

The Catholic Education Team send a warm welcome to you all, especially of those who are new to post. I am so pleased to welcome back all the team after furlough, and they are all looking forward to working with you again.

Clearly, in these current circumstances, we are looking at different ways of working with you so that we can offer you the support and guidance which you need and the advisers have already started to contact individual schools. Please do get in touch with your adviser should you need any support and guidance.

Similarly, with INSET we will be providing the usual suite of courses although the way in which they are organised and presented will be different. Information about this will be shared with schools.

News & Updates

During lockdown we were able to maintain communication with regular emails containing news and updates relating to RE, Catholic life and Collective Worship. The response to this has been very positive and, certainly for the time being, these will continue to be sent out on a regular basis.



The God Who Speaks

As mentioned before the summer, the Bishops have decided to support this initiative through to 23 January 2022 on the Sunday of the Word of God. Although many of the events for the campaign have now been deferred, this will continue to be a focus on the life of the Church.

Our scripture quotations for this term are:

Autumn 1:

“In the beginning the Word already existed; the Word was with God, and the Word was God” John 1:1

Autumn 2:

“And the word became flesh and dwelt among us ” John 1:14

A Prayer from The Book of Blessings

God is the source of all wisdom and knowledge.

Let us ask him to bless those who seek to learn and their teachers.

For students, that the Spirit of God may grant them the gifts of wisdom of understanding.

For teachers, that they may share their knowledge with gentleness, patience, and concern for their students. Amen.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Contact

The School Improvement Team is working hard to support our schools. We aim to contact all new-to-post Headteachers in the next couple of weeks and we also hope to speak with all Headteachers before half term. There are 237 schools in our Diocese so please bear with us but please don't hesitate to contact us if we can be of any support to you.

Intervention

Direct intervention is currently taking place in a number of our schools which involves Diocesan Officers working on a daily basis with Directors, LGBs and SLTs to support: the academy conversion process; strategic improvements in Catholic Life, leadership, the curriculum and sixth form; preparing, and being part of the Ofsted process and the subsequent action planning; staffing re-structuring; ethos and culture; raising standards in attainment and progress and Teaching School deployments in CPD, ITT and School to School support by SLEs and NLEs. Schools that feel they could benefit from these interventions should contact us.

A few of our schools have been involved in pilot inspections and any relevant generic information gained during these visits will be shared with Headteachers. We expect several of our schools will receive an Ofsted 'visit' before Christmas and a member of the School Improvement Team will contact Headteachers and endeavour to speak to inspectors during their visit to support the school.

Information regarding visits and plans to resume inspections will be shared with Headteachers via email as soon as it is received. So far, the messages regarding Ofsted 'visits' has been coherent and consistent, and I hope that you have found the emails useful.

Training

The School Improvement Team will be running a number of virtual Ofsted Workshops which will be targeted at schools expecting inspection. Schools will be contacted by the BDES and invited to attend a virtual meeting. We aim to provide the workshops to Heads initially and then to widen the audience to include Governors and Directors.

Keeping Children Safe in Education

Just in case you have missed it, please be aware that KCSIE has been reviewed and can be accessed by the link below. It is expected that all staff and governors are familiar with Part 1 and Annex H has a list of the main changes from September 2020. Please ensure that all references to KCSIE in policies state the September 2020 edition

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

Please make sure that those persons involved in recruitment in your school are up to date with their safer recruitment training.

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

It has continued to be a challenging time for all our MAC and school leaders, Directors and governors with many continuing work over the summer to ensure a safe and welcome start to the academic year. There has been a wonderful generosity of spirit displayed by our MACs and school leaders in supporting each other and their wider communities during these difficult times.

A Diocesan search campaign has now been launched for the role of Catholic Senior Executive Leader (CEO level equivalent) – www.becomingacsel.co.uk Have a look if you'd like to find out more about this role.

There are a number of CSEL opportunities being advertised and this page will be continually updated with relevant links.

We welcome those who have recently taken up senior leadership positions in our schools and thank those experienced leaders who have kindly agreed to act as their mentor. We are still reviewing how we can continue to hold training and induction sessions in the current circumstances and are piloting initial short sessions via Zoom this month.

If you have any questions relating to leadership, do please email Yvonne Salter Wright on leadership@bdes.org.uk

****Leadership Recruitment****

It is important that we are informed as promptly as possible of any potential senior leadership vacancies. The DES must be involved in any appointment involving a protected post in a Catholic school. This enables us to support and advise Boards, governing bodies and senior executive leaders throughout the recruitment process in accordance with the Bishops Memorandum.

In order to do this most effectively we ask that the Chair of the relevant board or governing body (or the individual delegated with responsibility for recruitment to the post) completes a brief online form as soon as they become aware of such a potential vacancy: <https://www.bdes.org.uk/vacancynotification.html>

****Free Advertising for School Vacancies ****

All vacancies for *senior leadership positions* can be posted on the BDES website at

<https://www.bdes.org.uk/vacancies.html>

We would encourage all schools to take advantage of the ***free national advertising service offered by the government*** for all teaching and leadership positions in all schools across the country. This has been developed by the DFE in conjunction with the CES so that it is suitable for our Catholic schools. Thank you for all those schools or MACs that are currently registered to use it.

If you have not done so already, please sign up for this FREE service:

<https://teaching-vacancies.service.gov.uk/identifications/new>

Contracts and Policies

It is important that for all appointments the most up to date CES contracts are used.

The exception to this is for the position of Catholic Senior Executive Leader (CSEL) when a specific BDES model contract must be used, which has been agreed following consultation with the CES.

Also, if your Board or governing body will soon be undertaking your annual policy review, please ensure that you are using the model policies provided by the Catholic Education Services (CES) which are available on their website or via <https://www.bdes.org.uk/hr--recruitment.html>

****IMPORTANT UPDATE: Leadership Training and Events****

The Leadership Conference originally planned for the 19th June 2020 was initially postponed until the 4th Dec 2020. Given the current restrictions on large numbers of people meeting together it has been decided to delay it yet again.

DES colleagues are in liaison with the ICC with the possibility of offering a Conference in the Spring Term. We will keep you informed of the outcomes of their discussions.

Admissions and Appeals

Schools will by now have received an email regarding the setting of the school's 2022/2023 admissions policy that needs to be a governors' agenda item for this term. This email contains information on what schools need to do and the deadlines that must be met. Further information on school admissions, including the model policies for 2022/2023 is available on the DES website at

<https://www.bdes.org.uk/admissions.html>

Can I also remind all schools that it is a parent's absolute right to appeal should a request for a place in a school be refused. If a parent wishes to exercise this right, please contact Rebecca Tonks (r.tonks@bdes.org.uk) to request the current appeals guidance and lists of appeal clerks and panel members. Whilst face to face appeal hearings cannot be conducted at the moment, the government introduced new legislation in order for hearings to be heard by video conferencing, therefore the appeal must still be arranged. Again, further information is available on the website from the above link.

It would be very helpful if the name and email address of the person in your school who deals with school admissions on a day to day basis could be sent to Rebecca Tonks (email address above) so that we can ensure that information sent out reaches the correct person.

Governance

Please allow plenty of time when submitting applications for Foundation Governors or Directors, particularly for reappointments where this will help to ensure there is no break in a governors term of office. If possible, please email your form to Rebecca Tonks (r.tonks@bdes.org.uk) as this will speed up the process. We will still continue to deal with forms submitted through the post as normal.

Can all schools please confirm the name of their Chair as this can often change during the autumn term and it's important that our records are up to date. Please also let us know if the name and/or contact details of the Clerk changes. Again, this will ensure that any information sent out reaches the correct person.

BUILDINGS AND FINANCE

Health and Safety Executive: Checking of Schools Risk Assessments by Civica

We have been informed that the Health and Safety Executive are contacting schools in order to 'check their risk assessments and the arrangements they have in place to reduce the risk of transmission of coronavirus'. Inspectors will check that the school has carried out a 'suitable and sufficient' risk assessment and put in place measures to make the school COVID-secure in line with the latest government guidance. Please do share this information with your school staff.

Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR) Update

In response to the challenges presented by the Coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak, on the 30 July the Department announced that home to school transport operators will be eligible for a further time-limited exemption from PSVAR for closed door services, until the end of the 2020/21 academic year. This will ensure that when children and young people return to their classes in September, they will not be hindered by a lack of suitable transport.

Transport to school and other places of education: autumn term

In light of the current COVID-19 pandemic, the Department for Education has published new guidance on 'transport to school and other places of education: autumn term 2020'.

The guidance is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020>.

Department for Education Guidance on the full opening of schools:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>

More information on some of the Key building checks that schools should carry out can be accessed here: <https://www.cibse.org/coronavirus-covid-19/emerging-from-lockdown>

Buying PPE for schools

If you are buying personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies including, masks, sanitisers and other cleaning products, you can now access a range of Coronavirus (COVID-19) buying information and supplier information via GOV.UK 'Buying for schools' <https://bit.ly/DfECOVID19>

The buying pages are updated regularly, you can subscribe to updates here <https://bit.ly/DfEBuyingUpdates>

VA school Insurance

VA schools are now eligible to take their building insurance provision through the DfE's RPA scheme. Further details can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-risk-protection-arrangement-rpa-for-schools>

Please inform Toni Guest at the BDES should you decide to take up this option at t.guest@bdes.org.uk

Reminder

It is a DFE requirement that the governing body of all VA schools contribute 10% toward the costs of any capital project funded using Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) or School Condition Allocation (SCA) grant.

Capital update

The Department for Education announced an additional allocation of capital funding for VA schools in June. The Archdiocese of Birmingham secured an additional £2.4 million of capital funding. BDES have contacted those schools that have projects eligible for some of this funding.

ACADEMY STRATEGY

The Diocesan Academy Strategy continues to flourish and grow across the Archdiocese. There are now 121 Schools within 18 Multi Academy Companies (MACs), with a further 24 Schools planning to convert by 1st April 2021.

The key role of the Catholic Senior Executive Leader (CSEL) is providing strategic leadership for our MACs, currently there are a number of CSELS in post, with plans for further to be recruited within the next 3 – 6 months.

It should be noted that the ‘stronger together’ theme of our MACs has been very evident during the last 6 months, with Schools within MACs expressing very positive views on the support and guidance being provided.

The DES team continue to engage with all Schools to provide information on progressing towards Academy status and what this might look like in each local area as we work together to build significant and sustainable 3 – 19 Catholic Partnerships and Pathways across the Archdiocese.



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