

# The Maximilian

A monthly newsletter for governors within the Archdiocese of Southwark

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## Reflection from Canon Victor

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We give thanks to God that this academic year is now winding down and coming to an end. I believe there are many things you would like to thank God for and are genuinely grateful for. This year has been eventful for many schools; some have experienced significant challenges, loss, and new beginnings. In many ways, a lot has changed this year, just as the season has changed, and we are now well into summer and looking forward to our holidays.

While July may be the Season of Ordinary time, there are still many great Saints we celebrate this Month, such as Saint Thomas the Apostle on Monday 3rd July; Saint Maria Goretti, a Virgin Martyr, on Thursday 6th of July; Saint Benedict, Co-Patron of Europe on Tuesday 11th July; Saint Bonaventure a Doctor of the Church on Saturday 15th July; Saint Mary Magdalen on Saturday 22nd, Saint James the Apostle on 25th July; Saint Joachim and Saint Anne, parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Wednesday 26th July; Saints Martha, Mary and Lazarus on Saturday 29th July and Saint Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuit on Monday 31st July 2023.

August will also have many great feasts, notable of which is 15th August, when we celebrate the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven. Then in September, we will celebrate the Birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary on 8th September.

These feasts remind us that we are loved and valued by God, who has inspired so many great men and women before us to continue encouraging and supporting us to this day.

Thank you for all the excellent work you have done this year in your different schools; thank you for all the efforts you have put in this year. I am holding all of you in my thought and prayers during the summer months.

God bless you.

### **Canon Victor Darlington**

Episcopal Vicar for the Southeast Area,  
Commissions for Promoting Racial and Cultural Inclusion,  
Education and Director of Caritas, Archdiocese of Southwark

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## Updated Exclusions Guidance

Just before the half-term, the DfE updated its statutory guidance on Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement. The new guidance, which comes into force on the 1st September 2023, can be accessed [here](#). Until then, the current guidance remains in force.

Two key changes have been made:

### Cancellation of an Exclusion

The guidance has been updated with respect to the headteacher's ability to cancel an exclusion before it has been considered by the Governing Board, specifically:

- It now must be the head who informs the relevant parties (parents, pupil, LA and social worker and Virtual School Head, if appropriate) of the cancellation and that the notification must also now include the reason for the cancellation;
- The opportunity for parents to meet with the head to discuss the circumstances which led to the cancellation must now be arranged without delay;
- Rather than should, the pupil now must be allowed to return to the school from which they were excluded without delay;
- Any days that the pupil has spent out of school as a result of any exclusion, prior to this being cancelled, will count towards the maximum 45 school days permitted in any school year; and
- A permanent exclusion cannot be cancelled if the pupil has already been excluded for more than the 45 school days permitted (or if they will have exceeded the 45 day limit by the time the cancellation is implemented).

### Platform for formal Panel Hearings

Under the new guidance, both in-school exclusion/suspension Governor Panel Hearings and Independent Panel Review Hearings can now be heard virtually rather than in person, as is currently the case, as long as this has been requested by the parents and certain criteria has been met for a virtual hearing to take place. Part 11 of the guidance makes it clear that this can only be at the parents' request, not at the school's request, this should not be the default option and the Panel must be satisfied that the meeting is capable of being held fairly and transparently. Annex A of the updated guidance highlights the things that should be taken into consideration including the technology that will be used to support the meeting and whether the parents/excluded child have an appropriate space free from other distractions in order to allow for full participation.

The guidance also states that a remote access meeting can be held, even if it has not been requested by the parents, in the event of extraordinary events or unforeseen circumstances, such as an outbreak of infectious illness/disease.

The DfE has also published guidance specifically for parents, again coming into force from the 1st September 2023, which can be accessed [here](#). This guidance has been produced to provide better signposting and support for navigating the exclusion process and will replace the guidance that was previously contained as an annex within the statutory guidance document.



## Attendance

New plans to support pupils to drive up attendance rates in schools in order to improve pupils' attainment and welfare have recently been announced by the Government. These plans include the expansion of the successful sector-led Attendance Hubs programme with nine new lead hub schools, alongside the expansion of Attendance Mentors in areas of the country with the highest levels of pupil absence.

The nine new attendance hub leads will support up to 600 primary, secondary and alternative provision schools in England to improve their attendance by sharing effective practice and practical resources. Practice shared by hubs may include rolling out automatic text messaging to parents when pupils do not attend school and using data more effectively to identify children at risk of poor attendance, in order to intervene early.

The expansion of the Attendance Mentors programme, delivered by the children's charity Barnardo's, will see trained mentors work directly with 1,665 persistently and severely absent children and their families across Knowsley, Doncaster, Stoke-on-Trent and Salford to understand and overcome the barriers to attendance and support them back into school.

These new measures build on the Government's existing attendance strategy which includes: new expectations set out in guidance for schools, trusts and local authorities, a national attendance data dashboard providing more up-to-date attendance data so schools can target the most vulnerable, and the work of the national Attendance Action Alliance.

Evidence shows that pupils with higher attendance tend to have higher attainment across all key stages. Though pupil attendance is continuing to recover, the pandemic has still had a real impact. The new Attendance Hubs will start supporting other schools from June and mentors will begin working with children and families in the new areas from September. Findings from the expansion of the attendance hubs will determine whether the approach has the potential to be rolled out to other areas across the country.

The results of a study have also been recently published which looks at the characteristics of PAUO (persistent absence for unauthorised other reasons) pupils and examines the individual risk factors linked to being PAUO. The study looks at a cohort of pupil who were PAUO for at least one year of their secondary education and can be accessed [here](#).

## Supporting Outdoor Learning

The DfE has announced £15M of funding to help young people in disadvantaged areas to learn outside and experience nature. Schools in deprived areas will be able to use the funding to buy equipment to help children take part in outdoor learning or to provide routes to nature in SEND schools.

The National Education Nature Park and Climate Action Award scheme, led by the Natural History Museum partnership, will also be launched in the Autumn. The programme will provide opportunities for more outdoor learning for all children and young people.



# Academy Updates

## Trust Quality Descriptions

The DfE has recently published a draft set of trust quality descriptions for multi academy trusts. The descriptions follow the release of the Academies Regulatory and Commissioning Review report in March and will be used by Regional Directors when they are taking decisions to commission particular trusts.

The Trust Quality descriptions are based on the five pillars of quality for MATs published in the March 2022 Schools White Paper. The first three pillars covered

- High Quality and Inclusive Education;
- School Improvement; and
- Workforce.

The fourth and fifth pillars concerned Financial Management and Strategic Governance respectively. Following feedback from trusts regarding the importance of other centralised functions, like human resources and estates management, as well as the need to be clear about the role of executive as well as non-executive leadership, the DfE has expanded the final two pillars to cover

- Finance and Operations; and
- Governance and Leadership

The descriptors within Governance look at culture, the role of governance within a trust specifically for Members, as well the roles that the Board and CEO play individually as well as collectively with respect to strategy, executive and non-executive leadership, accountability and engagement.

## Trusts in School Inspections

The first half of the summer term saw Ofsted publish its report into the responsibilities of MATs, with respect to the inspection process, and how Ofsted evaluates their work in inspections. Currently, Ofsted's legal remit only permits inspections to operate at an individual school level, limiting the extent to which inspectors can report on the work of the trust and its influence.

Whilst the full Ofsted report can be accessed [here](#), key points include:

- Conversations with trusts are an integral part of a school's inspection: every school inspection of an academy includes discussions with trust leaders on the leadership and governance of the school. All trust leaders saw their role as supporting the headteacher and senior leaders during an inspection.  
However, the fact that Ofsted's legal powers require inspection to operate at school level only can leave the role of the trust in inspection unclear, causing frustration for trust leaders and inspectors.
- Trust leaders and inspectors highlighted that inspection at school level does not hold the trust sufficiently accountable or attribute enough credit to the trust's work. The lack of time on a school inspection was found to be the greatest barrier to fully exploring where trusts' involvement in their schools was relevant to school inspection judgements.
- Inspections showed the wide-ranging leadership role of trusts which reflected the diversity of aims, structures and responsibilities in the trust sector. Trust leaders said that they were always involved in strategic school leadership decisions, regardless of their operating model.





- Inspections cover the influential role that trusts have in the quality of education in their schools. The trusts Ofsted spoke to were always involved in designing the curriculum with trust leaders working with school leaders to develop a curriculum that worked for the school, regardless of their operating model. In 2019, Ofsted's research in 41 trusts found that some trusts had very little involvement in overseeing the quality of education; this research represents a marked improvement.
- Inspectors recognised the role of many trusts in setting expectations for teaching and in reinforcing and managing behaviour. Trust leaders emphasised the benefits of being able to use experts employed by the trust to manage behaviour throughout trust schools.
- Trusts often set the strategic vision for personal development and use trust resources to provide opportunities for pupils. Trust leaders emphasised the role of the trust in the community.

## Admissions Guidance for Summer Born Children

It should be noted that this guidance, for Local Authorities and school admission authorities, has been updated and can be accessed [here](#). This guidance should be read in conjunction with the [Schools Admissions Code](#).

### London Pupil Exodus?

A new study has revealed that nearly 50,000 pupils left London's schools last year. Analysis of school census data by Education Datalab shows 49,730 pupils left schools in the capital during the past academic year, while 38,591 joined. That equates to a net change of -1.2% across its secondaries and -0.9% within its primary schools, following consecutive falls in pupil rolls since 2016.

The Datalab study defines leavers as including those who go to school outside their borough, private school or home education. London fared particularly badly during the pandemic, with 1.67 pupils leaving for every pupil who joined a school between 2020 and 2021. While the situation improved post-Covid, the rate at which primary pupils left the capital for other regions also grew.

As a reminder, schools receive funding based on the number of pupils on roll, not their capacity, so surplus places create a huge financial strain. Lambeth is among the London boroughs to have experienced the steepest falls. It is understood that the council is considering merging up to 16 of its primaries, with government data showing that it will have the highest proportion, 29.2%, of spare places of any area next year.

### HOW LONDON'S SCHOOLS LOST THEIR PUPILS

ENGLAND		LONDON	
NET CHANGE IN PUPIL LEAVERS/JOINERS		NET CHANGE IN PUPIL LEAVERS/JOINERS	
	2019/20		2019/20
Primary	0.20%	Primary	-0.90%
Secondary	-0.50%	Secondary	-1.30%
	2020/21		2020/21
Primary	-0.40%	Primary	-1.80%
Secondary	-0.60%	Secondary	-1.50%
	2021/22		2021/22
Primary	0.70%	Primary	-0.90%
Secondary	-0.20%	Secondary	-1.20%



## Courses & Events

The clerks to governor forum dates have been set for the academic year 2023-2024. These have been sent out in an email directly to clerks.

If you haven't received these please email [clairewilliams@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:clairewilliams@rcaos.org.uk)

The schedule for governor training sessions has been set. Booking pages will be sent out 6 weeks prior to the session time and be available on the training page of the [website](#).

[This page](#) contains the dates and links to book onto the next series of sessions on Considering becoming a Foundation Governor or Foundation Director. This page also contains 2 A4 posters that can be used to encourage practising Catholics to become foundation governors or directors.

