

Diocese of Westminster Education Service

Witness to the Word:

School Bulletin 15.04.20

Dear Colleague in Catholic Education,

As a family of schools we to continue work with each other and for each other at this time of extraordinary need. The Education Service is committed to ensuring each school can receive the support it requires to cope with this crisis. Every Wednesday for the foreseeable future we will be providing a School Bulletin full of resources and links to resources that may be of interest to you and your school community. Please feel free to share widely.

Thank you for all you are doing for your school community and for Catholic education.

The Pope's Easter Message – Urbi et Orbi courtesy of Sean-Patrick Lovett, Vatican News

A different “contagion”

Millions of people watched and listened on various media platforms as the Pope repeated the Easter proclamation: “Christ, my hope, is risen!”. He called this message “a different ‘contagion’”, one that is transmitted “from heart to heart”. This Good News is like a new flame that springs up “in the night of a world already faced with epochal challenges, and now oppressed by a pandemic severely testing our whole human family”, said the Pope.

Christ’s resurrection is not a “magic formula that makes problems vanish”, he continued, “it is the victory of love over the root of evil”. This victory “does not ‘by-pass’ suffering and death, but passes through them, opening a path in the abyss, transforming evil into good”, he added.

Comfort for those affected by the coronavirus

Pope Francis acknowledged that “this is also a time of worry about an uncertain future, about jobs that are at risk”. He encouraged political leaders “to work actively for the common good”, providing the means “to enable everyone to lead a dignified life and, when circumstances allow, to assist them in resuming their normal daily activities”.

Not a time for indifference

This is not a time for indifference, said the Pope, “because the whole world is suffering and needs to be united in facing the pandemic”. He prayed that the risen Jesus may grant hope “to all the poor, to those living on the peripheries, to refugees and the homeless”. Pope Francis also called for the relaxation of international sanctions and for “the reduction, if not the forgiveness, of the debt burdening the balance sheets of the poorest nations”.

PHONE

FAX

WEB



Not a time for self-centredness

This is not a time for self-centredness, continued Pope Francis, because “the challenge we are facing is shared by all”. Europe, in particular, was able “to overcome the rivalries of the past” following the Second World War, “thanks to a concrete spirit of solidarity”. It is urgent “these rivalries do not regain force”, the Pope continued. We all need to recognize ourselves “as part of a single family and support one another”. Selfishly pursuing particular interests risks “damaging the peaceful coexistence and development of future generations”, he added.

Not a time for division

This is not a time for division, said the Pope, as he appealed for “an immediate global ceasefire in all corners of the world”. Criticizing the vast amounts of money spent on the arms trade, Pope Francis called for a solution to the ongoing conflicts in Syria, Yemen, Iraq and Lebanon. He said he hoped Israelis and Palestinians might resume dialogue, that the situation in eastern Ukraine might be resolved, and that “terrorist attacks carried out against so many innocent people in different African countries may come to an end”.

Not a time for forgetfulness

This is not a time for forgetfulness, continued Pope Francis, referring to the humanitarian crises being faced in Asia and Africa. He prayed for refugees and migrants “living in unbearable conditions, especially in Libya and on the border between Greece and Turkey”. The Pope prayed also that solutions may be found in Venezuela, allowing “international assistance to a population suffering from the grave political, socio-economic and health situation” there.

Christ dispels the darkness of suffering

“Indifference, self-centredness, division and forgetfulness are not words we want to hear at this time”, said the Pope. These words “seem to prevail when fear and death overwhelm us”, and we want to ban them forever, he added. Pope Francis concluded his *Urbi et Orbi* message with a prayer: “May Christ, who has already defeated death and opened for us the way to eternal salvation, dispel the darkness of our suffering humanity and lead us into the light of His glorious day. A day that knows no end”.

http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/urbi/documents/papa-francesco_20200412_urbi-et-orbi-pasqua.html

Full text of the Holy Father’s speech.

Objectives of the Education Service during Coronavirus (Covid-19) epidemic:

- To support Headteachers, Heads of RE, RE Coordinators, Governors and the wider school community to cope at this time of unprecedented challenge;
- To provide the updates from the UK Government, DfE, CES and the Diocese of Westminster on all aspects of the Coronavirus Covid-19 relating to schools and colleges;
- To provide resources and advice relating to the Teaching and Learning of RE;
- To provide resources and advice relating to Mental Health issues;
- To provide resources and advice relating to Spiritual support and renewal.

Teaching & Learning in RE:

Included with this bulletin is the following:

- NATRE home learning;
- Home / school activities;
- Reflection on Easter Sunday – mini vinnies;
- Religious Education TV and Film playlists;
- Messy St Mark’s Easter Activities.

The outreach of the Church to the faithful and call to prayer.

- The Cardinal’s Easter Message;
<https://rcdow.org.uk/cardinal/news/cardinals-easter-message-2020/>
- The Diocese is live streaming Masses and here is the link to those available.
<https://rcdow.org.uk/news/how-to-participate-in-mass-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/>
<https://soundcloud.com/catholicchurch>
- Bishop +John Sherrington provides some reflections for Easter – Know He is risen and walks at your side.
<https://rcdow.org.uk/news/know-that-he-is-risen-and-walks-at-your-side/>
- The Jesuit Pray as You Go site has changed to Pray as you Stay <https://pray-as-you-go.org>

Support for Mental Health:

Included with this bulletin is the following:

- Resources to support mental health;
- Support your mental health while working from home

The Education Service is very conscious how much the current situation is affecting the mental health of everyone who is involved in working in our family of schools. One key message we are receiving from health professionals is keep in touch with one another. The following resources have been recommended to us.

Rethink - <https://www.rethink.org/advice-and-information/covid-19-support/> - Mental Health charity providing advice, information and support on a range of issues from top tips of managing your mental health to budgeting during the pandemic.

NHS - <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-at-home-tips/> - 12 Steps to staying mentally healthy while staying at home.

Mental Health UK - <https://mentalhealth-uk.org/help-and-information/covid-19-and-your-mental-health/> - Mental Health charity providing advice, information and support on a range of issues from boosting your mental wellbeing to coping with isolation during the pandemic

BBC - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-51873799> - Coronavirus and protecting your mental health.

NEU - <https://neu.org.uk/coronavirus> - Support and advice on a range of issues linked to the Coronavirus Pandemic
<https://neu.org.uk/advice/coronavirus-what-you-need-know-child-mental-health-and-wellbeing-primary> - Specific advice on mental health and wellbeing for children
<https://neu.org.uk/advice/coronavirus-what-you-need-know-child-mental-health-and-wellbeing-secondary> - Specific advice on mental health and wellbeing for children and young people

Mental Health and Well-being Support for Key Workers

Support for NHS Staff - <https://people.nhs.uk/> - Advice and a hotline for Mental Health support for NHS Staff

Royal College of Nursing - <https://www.rcn.org.uk/get-help/member-support-services/counselling-service/covid-19-and-your-mental-wellbeing> - Advice for NHS staff on supporting their mental health.

MIND - <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coping-as-a-key-worker/> - Coping as a Key Worker
NHS Employers - <https://www.nhsemployers.org/covid19/health-safety-and-wellbeing> - Health, safety and well-being support and advice for key workers



Spiritual Support:

Included with this bulletin is the following:

- Catholic Christian Music Stations;
- Church TV stations;
- Daily Prayers for School Week 4;
- Divine Mercy Sunday;
- Spiritual Support Week 4;
- Support for students with disabilities;

UK Government & DfE Updates and links;

Maintaining Educational Provision for Vulnerable and Key Worker Children:

Recruitment

We have had questions concerning the recruitment process and whether it can continue in the current circumstances, and if it can, how it should best be managed. In particular, we have been asked what is going to happen in relation to notice provisions which require that notice needs to be provided by April 30th for head teachers and May 31st for teaching staff.


The current advice from the Department is that schools are responsible for managing their workforce and will need to continue to assess their staffing needs and recruitment requirements. When conducting recruitment activity, schools should have regard to the government's guidance on social distancing which means that face to face interviews will not be possible. Interviews will need to be held virtually or will need to be delayed as appropriate. The Department has agreed to look into the question of notice periods and come back to us with appropriate guidance.

It is worth noting, that it is possible for employers to accept less notice than is provided in an employee's contract of employment but we appreciate that in schools this could cause problems in that it may make it difficult for schools to recruit to fill positions if a consistent approach is not adopted across the board. We will provide further guidance on this issue as soon as it is available.

The LGA has published some useful guidance on employment issues and you may wish to refer to that for further guidance on employment related issues: <https://www.local.gov.uk/covid-19-employment-law-faqs>

Governance

You will have seen the guidance issued by the Department in relation to governance. Governors should not be meeting in person and should be conducting any business that is urgent using virtual meetings. It is important to ensure that any communications with governors, whether by way of virtual meetings or email communication, are secure and we would



advise governing bodies to agree a basic protocol setting out how such meetings will be run. Browne Jacobson has produced some useful FAQs for governing bodies which address some of the main concerns.

<https://www.brownejacobson.com/education/training-and-resources/blogs/2020/03/coronavirus-faqs-for-schools-and-academies>

Funding Questions

The CES have been asked for guidance about what schools should be doing in relation to paying their contractors. The guidance on .gov states “Schools will continue to receive their budgets for the coming year as usual regardless of any periods of partial or complete closure. This will ensure that they are able to continue to pay their staff and meet their other regular financial commitments”. This guidance and the Cabinet Office Procurement Policy Note (PPN 02/20) would suggest that schools should continue to pay those financial commitments that they have budgeted for but arrangements will need to be reviewed on a case by case basis in order to determine what arrangements can be made. We are aware that there may be some disparity between the Cabinet Office guidance and what is expected of schools and/or the advice that is being provided by local authorities. We have asked the Department for further clarity on this point and await further information. We will keep you informed as further guidance on this becomes available.


You should also note the guidance published yesterday setting out the financial support the DfE is putting in place to support schools during this time. Schools will continue to receive their core funding allocations for the 2020-21 financial year regardless of any periods of partial or complete closure. Exceptional funding is being provided for specific items judged likely to be necessary to allow schools to provide appropriate support to children continuing to attend schools under the current arrangements. Eligibility criteria to access the funding are set out in the guidance, *School Funding: exceptional costs associated with coronavirus (COVID-19) for the period March to July 2020*, which can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-schools/school-funding-exceptional-costs-associated-with-coronavirus-covid-19-for-the-period-march-to-july-2020>

School Admission Appeal Code Guidance

The DfE has now provided an update to say that in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic a number of organisations have contacted them asking for advice regarding school admission appeals. In particular, how to overcome the challenges posed by social distancing to in person appeal hearings.

In response to these queries the Department is currently drafting urgent temporary regulation measures which will disapply certain elements of the School Admission Appeal Code. The aim of the regulations is to give admissions authorities as much flexibility as possible to manage appeals in a way that best suits their local circumstance. It is anticipated that the regulatory changes will come into force on the 24 April 2020.

Specifically, the new regulations, which will be in force until 31 January 2021, will:

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- Disapply the requirement that appeal panels must be held in person and instead give flexibility for the panel hearing to take place either in person, by telephone, video conference or through paper-based appeals where all parties can make representations in writing;
 - Relax the rules with regards to what happens if one of the three panel members withdraws (temporarily or permanently) to make it permissible for the panel to continue with and conclude the panel as a panel of two; and
 - Amend the deadlines relating to appeals for the time that the new regulations are in force.

It has, however, been highlighted by the Department that the regulations will not remove any of the clerking duties for admissions appeals. In addition, parents will retain the right to lodge a maladministration complaint if they are unhappy with the way their appeal has been administered.

The regulations are currently pending Parliamentary approval. The CES will provide a further update once the regulations and guidance are available.

In advance of Primary National Offer Day we hope that this information about the forthcoming regulations will assist you in providing guidance to your schools about planning for upcoming appeals.

The full announcement with additional information on the proposals is available at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/admission-appeals-for-school-places/coronavirus-covid-19-school-admission-appeals>

Legal Advice Updates

Winckworth Sherwood have offered advice to schools. See the link below:

[Winckworth Sherwood Business Continuity Statement in response to COVID-19](#)

BrowneJacobson has now produced a free toolkit for governing bodies and academy trusts regarding what to do re employment matters during the lockdown. This covers many frequently asked questions including furloughing of staff, what do regarding wraparound and nursery staff, temporary staff, recruitment and dealing with unions.

<https://www.brownejacobson.com/education/training-and-resources/legal-updates/2020/04/coronavirus-employer-toolkit-for-schools-and-academies>