

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2015

Dear Colleagues,

It seems incredible that it was only four weeks ago when I wrote to you on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> January. So much has happened since then, both in schools and here at the Education Service, and it would be good to share some of this with you, as well as raise awareness of things on the horizon.

Thank you to those schools which I have already visited in the last four weeks, for their hospitality. I have been made to feel very welcome, and I am truly grateful. Many thanks also to those Headteachers whose Inductions I have already attended this term. These occasions have been both uplifting and moving, and it has been lovely to see school, parish and families all come together in celebration. My first month as Director has been largely taken up with meetings, and I am sorry not to have been able to visit more schools in these first few weeks. However, meetings have been extremely useful in helping me to familiarise myself with particular issues and to explore a variety of perspectives. I am indebted to all those who have given up valuable time to meet with me. To give you a flavour, over the past four weeks I have met with, amongst others, Trustees; the Diocesan Finance Committee; Primary Steering Committee; Local authorities; Teaching Schools; the Diocese of Chichester; the Jubilee organising committee; Academies Shadow Board; etc, etc.

LCVAP: I know you will be waiting to hear about LCVAP, so here is a summary of the position so far. As you will remember from my letter of Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> January, diocesan schools submitted bids in anticipation of an announcement re: 2015-2016 LCVAP funding. Bids submitted total £6,135,480. All bids were presented and scrutinised at an initial diocesan panel meeting; they were then ranked in priority order within each local authority in accordance with the DfE Conditions and Suitability Ratings criteria. Subsequent to that, the Diocesan Finance Committee has considered all LCVAP bids submitted, alongside the Education Service's suggested ranking.

As I write, Dioceses across the country are still awaiting an announcement from the DfE as to whether LCVAP funding will be made available. If/when an announcement is forthcoming, each LA will be notified how much LCVAP they have been allocated by the DfE. This yearly fund is allocated to each LA (**not to the Diocese**) and is for the larger modernisation and condition works that Catholic, Anglican and foundation schools are unable to fund using their DFC. It is important therefore to note that LCVAP funding sits with the local authority, and NOT the Diocese. Although we represent our schools, as detailed below, the Diocese is not a budget holder.

If/when an LCVAP announcement is forthcoming, the Education Service's role will be to negotiate with each of our four local authorities in order to secure as much funding as possible for proposed school projects - it is for this reason that we have ranked bids within each LA, as requests inevitably exceed the funding available to each LA. All VA bodies and foundation schools are included in meetings with the LA to agree the use of the funds available. In practice, this means that A&B and the Diocese of Chichester negotiate not only with the local authority but also with each other in order to arrive at as fair a settlement as possible, according to identified priorities.

As soon as an announcement is made by the DfE regarding LCVAP funding, I will let you know. We will then begin negotiations with each local authority.

Academies: Since I last wrote to you, Julianne Birch and James Kibble have joined the Shadow Board, as elected Primary and Secondary Headteachers respectively. In addition Teresa Kenefick will join the Board as a second elected Primary Headteacher, in recognition of the large number of Primary Schools within the Diocese. Interviews are being held in late February for shortlisted applicants with legal and/or financial background to join the Shadow Board. As you know, Trustees met recently with members of the Shadow Board, Headteacher representatives, and me, to evaluate the Diocesan MAT model. Trustees are currently reflecting on our discussions.

Jointly hosted by the Education Service and the Shadow Board, an 'Academies Assembly Day' will be held on 11<sup>th</sup> March at the AMEX Stadium. Each school is invited to send the Headteacher, CoG and one other, at no cost. The day is being planned in a deliberately facilitative manner, so there will be ample opportunities for questions and discussion, as well as presentations from Dominic Herrington (Regional Schools Commissioner) and Andrea Squires (Winckworth Sherwood). Trustees are also being invited to listen to the presentations and ensuing discussions. Tables will be facilitated by members of the Academies Shadow Board, and will provide an opportunity to explore the proposed Scheme of Delegation. It is important that the Diocese gets the Academies model right in order to protect everything that makes our Catholic schools so distinctive, and this is a key opportunity to feed into that discussion. I would urge schools to take up the invitation.

Recruitment: As you may know, we are interviewing for a Deputy Director next week. We hope to be able to make an announcement to schools before half-term.

Collaboration: As promised, I have summarised the feedback about collaboration from South Lodge conference last term, and have shared headlines with the Primary Steering Committee. However, I would like to share the findings in depth with Headteachers, and I think the best opportunity for this would be the afternoon of the Headteachers' Conference on Mon 23<sup>rd</sup> March. We are planning to make this afternoon a series of cross-phase interactive workshops, around the theme of collaboration and hope that this will be of interest to many. As originally planned, the morning will be led by Lat Blaylock (editor of *RE Today*), on the theme of the Headteacher developing a community of faith. More details regarding the afternoon will follow shortly.

Working parties: As some of you know, I am hoping to set up two short-life working parties, one to explore succession planning strategies and the other to explore the development of collaborative links across the Diocese. Succession planning and the recruitment of Catholic leaders is probably the most pressing need for the Diocese. Likewise, with the dismantling of much local authority support, effective inter-school collaboration is absolutely key. The working parties will have a clearly defined objective; will not be an onerous commitment; and will, I hope, operate in the Summer term, making recommendations for 2015-2016. I will be in touch at greater length about these in the next few weeks.

Website: I hope you have all managed to see our new, much improved website. If you have not yet visited it, please do - we are confident you will be pleasantly surprised!

Lastly, thank you for the many messages of support for the Education Service. Every message means a great deal to us, and we are all very touched by your kindness. You are all in our thoughts and prayers; please keep us in yours also.

Best Wishes,

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