

THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ARUNDEL & BRIGHTON

Report of the Meeting of the Education Committee

Venue: St Philip Howard Centre, Crawley

Date: 25 March 2026

Attendance

Present:

Rev Mgr Canon Tony Barry (Chair), Deborah Bligh, Sarah Clayton, Tom Collins (online), Maria Cowler, Michael Ferry, Dcn Jon Harman, Professor John Lydon, Rev Canon Tim Madeley, Toby Miller, Julie Oldroyd and Ray Williamson.

In attendance:

Tamsin Connick (Secretary).

Apologies:

Joe Davies, Finula Farr, Sarah Kilmartin, Annie Sutton and Canon Jonathan Martin.

1. Opening Prayer

The meeting opened with prayer led by the Chair.

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of personal or prejudicial interests were made.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The report of the meeting held on 19 November 2025 was approved as an accurate record.

4. Buildings, Estates and School Finance

The Committee received an update on the management of the diocesan school estate and school finances.

Members noted:

- ongoing national changes to capital funding and estate management;
- developments in Department for Education systems for managing school estate information;
- continued pressures on capital funding and school budgets;

- increasing demand for essential maintenance and compliance works across schools;
- the importance of supporting schools in managing estates effectively and sharing good practice.

The Committee also received an update on a significant emergency building project currently being supported by the Diocese.

5. School Admissions

The Committee received an update on the implementation of the new diocesan model admission policies.

Members noted:

- strong progress in adopting the new admission arrangements across primary and secondary schools;
- continued support being provided to schools and governing bodies during implementation;
- the importance of ensuring policies remain legally compliant, consistent and clearly understood;
- the need for schools to review admissions data regularly to inform future planning.

6. Planning and Pupil Numbers

The Committee considered pupil admission data for September 2026.

Members noted:

- the impact of declining birth rates on primary school applications in some areas of the Diocese;
- that secondary school admissions remain strong;
- the importance of working closely with local authorities on place planning;
- the continued need to strengthen links between parishes and schools in supporting Catholic education.

The Committee agreed that trends in pupil numbers would continue to be monitored carefully to inform future planning.

7. Diocesan Education Service Updates

Academy Programme

The Committee received an update on the continuing development of Catholic Multi Academy Trusts across the Diocese and noted the progress being made by schools at different stages of the conversion process.

School Singing Programme

Members welcomed the continued expansion of the diocesan School Singing Programme and plans to extend participation further during the coming year.

School Leaders' Conference

The Committee received details of the 2026 School Leaders' Conference, which will explore the theme:

Imago Dei: Being Human in a World of Emerging Technologies and AI.

Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE)

Members received an update on national developments following revised statutory guidance and noted the continuing support available to schools.

Catholic Schools Inspection (CSI)

The Committee noted progress on the national review of the Catholic Schools Inspection framework and encouraged participation in the consultation process.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

The Committee received an update on national developments relating to SEND and discussed the importance of ensuring schools are appropriately supported to deliver inclusive education.

Leadership

Members received updates on leadership developments across the Diocese.

8. Future Meetings

The next meetings of the Education Committee will be held on:

- 3 June 2026
- 25 November 2026
- 24 March 2027
- 9 June 2027

Meetings take place from **10.45 am–12.45 pm**, followed by lunch.

9. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

The meeting closed at **12.35 pm**.